

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and members of the Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Nacole Palmer, and I live in Bowdoin. I have been an educator for almost 20 years, and I am also a professional classical singer and new mom.

I speak to you today in favor of LD 1392.

I used to think that gun violence was something terrible but something that would never affect me personally. And then I happened to be living in Connecticut when the massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School happened. Three of the children who were killed were one degree of separation away from me. That's when I started to really pay attention and to think about how I can make a difference to prevent gun deaths.

Since moving to Maine, I have met many people whose lives have been irrevocably harmed by gun violence. I am thinking of Judi and Wayne Richardson, who lost their daughter Darien, after she was shot in a home invasion in Portland. I am thinking of a friend who lost a brother, who was killed as a bystander in a shooting, and her father, who took his own life by gun. I am thinking of the two year old in Waterville who was shot in the head by his sibling in January. I am thinking of the 15 year old girl who shot and killed herself last week in Western Maine. Tragedy upon tragedy. These are the real life consequences of our state's current laws.

This bill is not partisan. It does not call for restrictions on anyone's rights. It does not grant certain rights.

This bill is, at its heart, a bill about truth. Either we, as a state, want to know the truth about the gun deaths and the injuries that happen, or we don't.

Either you will vote in favor of learning truth, or you won't.

I would argue that knowing the truth is better than living in ignorance. It allows us to learn and do better. It allows us to identify and respond to changes in trends. It allows us to make decisions that are in the best interests of health and public safety.

There has been a movement in our country to reject science, to reject things that are objectively true, to create one's own "reality." This thinking often results in tragic and unnecessary deaths. I am thinking of the attack on the Capitol on January 6, which was fueled by lies. I am thinking of our nation's paltry and feeble initial response to Covid, which was based on lies about the virulence and dangers of the disease, and which resulted in hundreds of thousands of avoidable deaths.

Maine has been a leader in fighting Covid because we have people like Dr. Shah and Governor Mills who appreciate that science, and the data it provides, can help us make the best decisions.

Let's make sure that we bring that same sensible approach, guided by learning the truth, to the issue of guns here in Maine.

Please vote in support of LD 1392. Thank you.