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Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

My name is Cam Shannon. I live in Yarmouth. I am here today in support of LD 1392: An Act directing the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention to Release Annually Public Health Data Regarding Certain Fatalities and Hospitalizations. Every year, approximately 150 Mainers die from firearms. Countless others are injured. If made law, this bill would direct the Maine CDC to report data about these deaths and injuries to the Maine legislature.

There are many reasons to support this law, but let me start with a basic one: More information is better. More data is better. It grounds the conversation in facts. Giving you an annual report and data does not compel action, does not take away your authority, does not determine policy. But it helps you shape it. You make your decisions based on facts, data, evidence. This report will help.

Second, we know that this kind of data in particular will help you address this particular problem. An annual report would help you as law-makers understand the scope of gun violence in Maine and create policy that effectively responds to the problem. According to the American Public Health Association, APHA, "Gun violence is a public health crisis" that requires a public health approach, including, "data collection and surveillance, research to understand which policies and programs are effective in decreasing gun violence, initiatives to implement those measures that are shown to work and continued surveillance and evaluation." In other words, the APHA would recommend a report just like the one outlined in 1392 to help reduce firearm deaths in Maine.

If you need any more reason to support this bill, consider the following. The number of U.S. motor vehicle deaths peaked in 1969 at a staggering 55,043 people. Scientists gathered data about when, how, and why these fatalities occurred and shared the data. Everyone came to better understand the problem. Driving under the influence was costing lives. Law-makers raised the drinking age from 18 to 21 and public health professionals created campaigns to raise awareness about the dangers of drunk driving. Engineers improved car design adding anti-lock brakes, airbags, and seatbelts. Pediatricians convinced parents of the importance of always buckling. Now far fewer Americans die in car accidents - only 11 deaths per every 100,000 Americans, as compared to 30 back in 1969.

This is a huge public health win. And it all started with data collection and dissemination. Please, let's do the same here. Please vote "ought to pass".