

Dane Courtois  
Hiram  
LD 424

To the Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee,

As a proud Mainer, I write to express my enthusiastic support for LD 424, which would extend concealed carry rights to individuals aged 18 to 20 in our state. This bill not only upholds Maine's strong tradition of individual liberty and self-reliance but also enhances public safety by ensuring more law-abiding citizens—including our young adults—can protect themselves and their communities in an increasingly uncertain world.

Maine has long been a state that respects the rights of its people. At 18, our young adults can vote in Augusta, enlist to defend our nation, and legally hunt with firearms across our vast forests and fields. They work hard—whether on fishing boats in Downeast Maine, in logging camps up north, or at businesses in Portland—and they deserve the same right to self-defense as those just a few years older. LD 424 aligns with Maine's constitutional carry heritage, where since 2015, adults 21 and over have carried concealed without permits. Extending this to 18- to 20-year-olds who meet background check and training requirements is a logical next step, ensuring fairness and consistency under the law.

Opponents may question the maturity of this age group, but Maine's concealed carry process already filters for responsibility. Applicants must pass rigorous background checks, and many voluntarily pursue training—standards that ensure only capable, law-abiding individuals carry. An 18-year-old from Presque Isle or Biddeford who meets these criteria is no less qualified than a 21-year-old from Bangor. Denying them this right leaves them vulnerable, especially in rural areas where law enforcement response times can stretch due to our state's geography.

Beyond individual rights, LD 424 strengthens public safety by increasing the presence of armed, responsible citizens. More firearms in the hands of law-abiding Mainers act as a deterrent to crime. Criminals thrive on the perception of easy targets; a society where more people—young and old—can defend themselves shifts that dynamic. Studies from states with broader concealed carry laws, like Texas and Florida, show that lawful gun owners often de-escalate or prevent violent incidents. In Maine, where we face rising concerns like drug-related crime spilling over from out of state, empowering 18- to 20-year-olds to carry concealed could mean faster responses to threats in places like Lewiston or along our remote border towns—long before police can arrive.

Consider the numbers: Maine's violent crime rate, while lower than the national average, has ticked upward in recent years, with aggravated assaults rising in rural counties. Meanwhile, our concealed carry permit holders have a near-spotless record of compliance. Expanding this to younger adults doesn't flood the streets with guns—it equips a small, vetted group to contribute to our collective security. A young woman walking home from a late shift in Waterville or a student at UMaine Orono deserves the chance to deter an attacker. When more good people carry, the balance tips against those who prey on the defenseless.

LD 424 is about trust—trust in Maine's young adults, trust in our laws, and trust that an armed populace makes us safer. I urge you to pass this bill, reinforcing our state's commitment to liberty and security. Thank you for your time and service to Maine.

Sincerely,  
Dane Courtois