



Committee on Judiciary
Testimony in Support of:

*L.D. 677, An Act to Update the Statutory Definition of "Machine Gun"
and Prohibit Possession of a Rapid-fire Device*

*L.D. 1109, An Act to Reduce Gun Violence Casualties in Maine by Prohibiting the
Possession of Large-capacity Ammunition Feeding Devices*

L.D. 1126, An Act Requiring Serial Numbers on Firearms and Prohibiting Undetectable Firearms

By Heide Lester on behalf of EqualityMaine

March 26, 2025

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and distinguished members of the Committee on Judiciary,

My name is Heide Lester, and I am the Deputy Director of EqualityMaine, which has been advocating on behalf of Maine's LGBTQ+ community since 1984. We strongly support L.D. 677, L.D. 1109, and L.D. 1126 as these bills will help reduce gun violence in Maine, which has the highest gun death rate in New England.

LGBTQ+ people are more than two times as likely to be victims of gun violence than their straight and cisgender peers.¹ Since 2013, nearly two-thirds of fatal violence toward transgender and gender-expansive people involved a gun; the majority of those victims were black women under the age of 30.² According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Reporting Program, more than 20% of hate crimes in 2023 were motivated by sexual orientation or gender identity bias.³ Also over the course of 2023, anti-LGBTQ hate groups increased by about one third to 86 – the highest number of anti-LGBTQ groups ever listed by the Southern Poverty Law Center and a statistic with serious implications for a possible rise in discrimination-based violence.⁴ The combination of a lack of adequate laws to prevent gun violence and animosity towards the LGBTQ+ community has led to the loss of lives as well as immense harm and trauma caused by violence.

Rapid fire devices such as bump stocks and machine gun conversion devices have been used in several high-profile mass shootings and other horrific incidents of gunfire across the country. Some of these devices enable a shooter to fire up to 1,200 rounds per minute, and over 20 states, such as Louisiana, Virginia, and Florida, have passed laws to ban some or all such devices. While federal law prohibits some

¹ "Facts and Statistics About the Impact of Gun Violence on LGBTQ+ People." *Sandy Hook Promise*, 18 Oct. 2024, sandyhookpromise.org/blog/news/facts-and-statistics-about-the-impact-of-gun-violence-on-lgbtq-people/.

² "Gun Violence Prevention." HRC, www.hrc.org/resources/gun-violence-prevention.

³ www.fbi.gov/how-we-can-help-you/more-fbi-services-and-information/ucr/hate-crime.

⁴ "Anti-LGBTQ." *Southern Poverty Law Center*, 19 Mar. 2025, www.splcenter.org/resources/extremist-files/anti-lgbtq/.

machine gun conversion and rapid fire devices, it does not prohibit all, and state law enforcement agencies and state prosecutors are not able to enforce federal prohibitions on their own. As more machine gun conversion devices are being recovered from shootings – there was a nearly 570% increase between 2011 and 2021 nationwide⁵ – it is high time for Maine to join other states in preventing the conversion of semi-automatic weapons into machine guns.

Shootings with the greatest number of casualties often involve firearms that accept large capacity magazines (LCMs) as they increase the number of rounds that can be fired at potential victims before having to pause to reload or switch weapons. In addition to the greater lethality associated with being struck by multiple rounds, the lack of pausing means reduced opportunities for victims to escape or for law enforcement and bystanders to intervene. A study evaluating the effect of LCM bans on the frequency and lethality of high-fatality mass shootings in the United States concluded that attacks involving LCMs resulted in a 62% higher mean average death toll. The incidence of high-fatality mass shootings in non-LCM ban states was more than double the rate in LCM ban states, and the annual number of deaths was more than 3 times higher.⁶ LCM bans reduce both the incidence of, and number of people killed in, mass shootings.

Federal and state laws in Maine allow law enforcement to trace crime guns using their serial numbers and help keep people with significant histories of violence or domestic abuse from accessing guns. However, home-finished and homemade weapons currently do not need to be serialized in Maine. This means that those who wish to conceal their unlawful activity from law enforcement, engage in gun trafficking, and/or avoid criminal background checks can quickly and easily build their own deadly weapons from untraceable kits and components. As stated in the majority opinion written by United States Supreme Court Justice Neil Gorsuch in *Bondi v. Vanderstok*, “[p]olice departments around the Nation” have “confronted an explosion of crimes” involving these “ghost guns.” In 2017, law enforcement agencies submitted about 1,600 ghost guns to the federal government for tracing. By 2021, that number jumped to more than 19,000. Efforts to trace the ownership of these weapons...have proven “almost entirely futile.”⁷ Law enforcement officers are currently missing a tool that is essential for investigating crimes involving these guns, and no one should be able to exploit a loophole to evade background checks and to escape detection by law enforcement.

We urge you to vote “Ought To Pass” on L.D. 677, L.D. 1109, and L.D. 1126. Prohibiting rapid fire devices and machine gun conversion devices, prohibiting the purchase and possession of ammunition feeding devices that hold more than 10 rounds of ammunition, and holding unserialized firearms to the same standards as all other guns in Maine are important ways to help mitigate gun violence in our state.

Thank you,

Heide Lester (they/them)

⁵ “DOJ Releases New Training to Focus on Detecting Machine Gun Conversion Devices.” *Office of Justice Programs*, 6 Sept. 2024, ojp.gov/archives/pressreleases/2024/doj-releases-new-training-focus-detecting-machine-gun-conversion-devices.

⁶ Klarevas, Louis, et al. *American Journal of Public Health*, vol. 109, no. 12, Dec. 2019, pp. 1754–1761, doi:10.2105/ajph.2019.305311.

⁷ “*Bondi v. Vanderstok*, 604 U.S. ____ (2025).” *Justia Law*, supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/604/23-852/.