

Testimony in support of

LD 1120, An Act to Promote the Secure Storage of Firearms, and

LD 1299, An Act to Prohibit the Unsecured Storage of Handguns in Motor Vehicles

April 16, 2025

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Art Blank and I live in Bar Harbor and am submitting this testimony representing the Healthy Acadia Board of Directors. Healthy Acadia is a nonprofit community health organization serving primarily Hancock and Washington counties, in addition to partnering with others to deliver services across the state. We submit this testimony in strong support of LD 1120 and LD 1299.

We support a public health approach to gun safety, to uphold Maine's traditions of safe and appropriate gun use, while supporting common-sense policies regarding access to guns that support the safety and well-being of all Mainers. We believe these measures discussed today meet this goal.

LD 1120, An Act to Promote the Secure Storage of Firearms, promotes common-sense policy, making it a definitive responsibility to safely store a firearm if it may be accessed by a minor or prohibited person. The law requires notice be made by firearm dealers reminding purchasers of this responsibility.

As we've testified in prior hearings, suicide by firearm is a major public health issue for our youth. Safe storage laws help prevent suicide by keeping guns out of the hands of youth and reducing access for lawful adult owners in crisis. Keeping firearms safely stored is a commonsense responsibility to place on gun owners, and no doubt would contribute to reducing accidents and deterring theft.

LD 1299, An Act to Prohibit the Unsecured Storage of Handguns in Motor Vehicles, is another commonsense proposal that will benefit public health. On average, at least one gun is stolen from a car every nine minutes in the United States. Research shows that storing firearms in vehicles

significantly increases the risk of theft, and that the rate of gun thefts from cars tripled from 2013–2023. From 2016-2019, Maine averaged 897 thefts from motor vehicles per year, which rose to 1,450 per year from 2020 to 2023. Requiring having a handgun stored in an unoccupied vehicle to be secured out of sight is a commonsense responsibility for handgun owners. Vehicles thefts make up more than half of gun thefts, often leading to further criminal activity.

Thank you for your time and commitment to a safe community, and I urge you to vote OUGHT to pass on LDs 1120 and 1229.