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American Academy of Pediatrics

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Testimony in SUPPORT of

- **LD 1120, AN ACT TO PROMOTE THE SECURE STORAGE OF FIREARMS**
- **LD 1299, AN ACT TO PROHIBIT THE UNSECURED STORAGE OF HANDGUNS IN MOTOR VEHICLES**

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

APRIL 16, 2025

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Distinguished Members of the Committee on Judiciary,

My name is Madeleine DesFosses, and I am the Advocacy and Public Health Manager for the Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (Maine AAP). The Maine AAP is a professional organization of 300 pediatricians and subspecialists who are dedicated to protecting the health of Maine children and adolescents. We are in strong support of LD 1120 and LD 1299, which will help to prevent accidental injuries and deaths, suicide, and gun theft.

In the United States, 4.6 million minors live in homes with at least one loaded, unlocked firearm (2). It only takes a few moments for a curious toddler to open a nightstand drawer and find a gun, or a suicidal teenager to find their parents' firearm tucked away in a closet. In these instances, the safe, secure storage of a firearm can make the difference between injury or death and a narrowly avoided tragedy.

In 2020, a 16-year-old in New Sharon accidentally shot and killed himself after finding a family member's handgun stored in a closet. The next year, a 2-year-old in Waterville was accidentally shot in the head by his sibling with a firearm that was kept in a closet. A few months later, a 2-year-old in West Bath found his parents' unsecured firearm on a nightstand and accidentally shot his parents. Luckily, both parents survived. The common theme is that while all of these incidents were unintentional, they could have been avoided if the firearms used had been stored safely and securely. That's exactly why we need laws that ensure gun owners store their firearms in a safe and secure manner.

Youth suicides can often be prevented through the safe storage of firearms, as the majority (79%) of firearms used in youth suicides belong to a family member of the youth (3). At a time when our youth and young people are experiencing a mental health crisis and rates of suicide and suicidal behavior are on the rise (4), we must make every effort to prevent youth from making the tragic decision to take their own life. Firearm storage becomes especially important during adolescence when caregivers tend to relax safe gun storage at a time when it is more important than ever to secure firearms due to ongoing brain development during adolescent and young adult years, which is known to result in impulsivity and sub-optimal decision making.

Please help to prevent unnecessary, avoidable firearm-related injuries and deaths among youth from occurring by voting "Ought to Pass" on LD 1120 and LD 1299.

Thank you for your time.

Madeleine DesFosses

Advocacy and Public Health Manager, Maine AAP

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