

Testimony in Support of LD 1743
An Act to Allow Municipalities to Prohibit Firearms Within Their Municipal Buildings
and Voting Places and at Their Municipal Public Proceedings

Good afternoon Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Scott Harriman, I live in Lewiston, and I am testifying **in support of** LD 1743 because this issue is real for me.

As elected officials, I'm sure you're all familiar with those engaged constituents who take a particular interest in governmental proceedings and who communicate with their representatives regularly. This is one of the most important features of our democracy and one that should be encouraged.

Some of you may also be familiar with a group of people who have less of an interest in good governance and more of a peculiar fascination with you as individuals. As a member of the Lewiston City Council for the past few years, I have become aware of several of these people in my area.

They occasionally come to city council meetings to speak, but they mainly stick to email and social media. These people publicly debate and criticize not just the usual things like what position I advocated for or how I voted on a particular item, but unrelated topics like my fashion choices, my diet, and how they imagine my sex life to be. One has even mailed me personal items, apparently in an attempt to humiliate me.

The most common denominator among this group is the dehumanizing language and rhetoric they direct toward me and other elected officials. Their insults vary, but they mostly fall into two categories, centered around their perception that I am homosexual and that I am intellectually disabled.

Another thing they have in common is that most of them carry guns with them when they are out in public. I know this because they have brought it up, unprompted, on several occasions, both directly to me and indirectly. The same person who mailed me the items I mentioned above, who has bragged about carrying a gun, also messaged me saying *"I hope that a random bullet does not find you when you cross the street."*

Passing this legislation would allow municipalities to decide, based on their own local conditions, whether people can bring guns to gatherings like city council meetings, school board meetings, and voting places.

It's hard enough to convince people to run for local office given the significant time commitment, very low compensation, and regular public scrutiny, let alone the unusual and disconcerting behavior from certain residents. Let's allow elected officials and residents alike to attend meetings and conduct the public's business with a little less anxiety about what these people might do.

Please vote **Ought to Pass** on LD 1743. Thank you for your time today.

Sincerely,

Scott A. Harriman (he/him)
Lewiston, Maine
harriman.scott@gmail.com