

Betsy Williams
Brunswick
LD 1743

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Betsy Williams, I live in Brunswick and I am writing in support of LD 1743, a bill which would allow municipalities the option of enhancing public safety in their buildings by prohibiting firearms.

In November 2022 I was collecting referendum signatures on Election Day at the Augusta Civic Center. It was a busy table and the last thing I expected to catch my eye was a revolver, attached to the belt of a middle-aged man.

Now I'd be exaggerating to say I was scared. I wasn't. There was nothing threatening about the man. But it isn't an exaggeration to say I was alarmed. My concern grew when he started boasting to a nearby man about what kind of gun it was and where he got it.

As I looked around the space, I wondered who might in fact be frightened seeing this gun and hearing this talk? He all but took it out of the holster to show it off! Is that allowed? What would have happened if he had? How would I and others have felt? Reacted? Would someone say or do something to escalate the situation? And why should I, or any other member of the public even have to ponder these questions when we go to vote?

A similar scenario could play out at any time in any municipal building in the state. The public doesn't have a choice about using municipal buildings, just as it doesn't have a choice about where to vote. What possible argument could be made for allowing a person to carry a weapon into a municipal building?

Frankly, I wish this bill went further than it does and required all municipalities to prohibit firearms that are not carried by law enforcement. But it doesn't. It simply allows municipalities to do what they believe is right: provide a safe, unthreatening environment to conduct the business of the people.

The State House does it. Let's give municipalities the chance to do the same thing. Please vote OTP on LD 1743.

Thank you.