

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and esteemed members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Michelle Fortier-Oosterman, and I live in Lyman, Maine. As a family survivor of a man who died by suicide with a gun during a mental health episode, I respectfully testify in support of LD 1378: An Act to Protect Maine Communities by Enacting the Extreme Risk Protection Order Act.

When I attended previous public hearings on gun safety I sat in an overflow room mostly full of gun advocates. I learned a lot by listening to their comments. One of the comments they made was that they felt that gun safety was a mental health issue. This legislation would address that concern.

At the State House yesterday, I spoke with a psychiatrist who was supporting safe storage because she recently had an adolescent client die by suicide with a gun. She had become aware of a gun in the home and had warned the parents to secure the gun. They neglected to do so. The doctor had no recourse. Again, LD 1378 would allow the doctor to have made efforts to prevent this death by gun violence.

My cousin died by his own hands with his own gun. His family had been battling his mental health issues for years. Removing the gun could have prevented this death by gun violence.

Extreme Risk Protection Orders will allow both families and law enforcement to petition a court, protecting due process while providing the opportunity to temporarily restrict someone's access to dangerous weapons when they're in crisis.

The Lewiston Commission report stated that Maine's current "yellow flag law" failed. We need laws that protect public safety and human lives.

Sincerely,

Michelle Fortier-Oosterman, LCSW
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