

Betsy Williams
Brunswick
LD 1378

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and members of the Judiciary,
My name is Betsy Williams, I live in Brunswick, and I am writing in support of LD 1378, An Act to Protect Maine Communities by Enacting the Extreme Risk Protection Order Act.

Although at first blush LD 1378 feels like it is taking something away from people, disempowering them, I ask you to consider that it is fundamentally an empowering bill that shows compassion for everyone involved in the epidemic of gun violence. In defense of new gun safety measures, we hear compassion for victims of gun violence, compassion for those who fear gun violence, even compassion for those who commit gun violence. LD 1378 directs compassion toward another population impacted by gun violence—those who suspect someone they know might harm themselves or others with a gun and are unable to do anything about it.

Who are those people? Family members who watch a loved one struggle with life's challenges to the point of wanting to end their own lives. Family members who overhear threats of violence, knowing the person making the threat owns guns. Law enforcement agencies and officers who know the current law—the so-called yellow flag law—will take too much time to put into place.

Can you imagine being one of these people? You can do nothing and, should a violent incident involving guns occur as you fear, you must live the rest of your life with the knowledge that you might have been able to stop it. Our laws must allow us to do what is right, not prohibit us.

We all want to live in a state where people feel safe. This is common ground, even between the most pro-gun and anti-gun activists. Let us meet on that common ground and empower every Maine citizen to join the effort to prevent harm from gun violence, to stop it before it happens. Please pass LD 1378 and allow those closest to the perpetrators of gun violence, and the law enforcement officers called to control them, to act compassionately to stop it.

Thank you for all your committee has done this year to advance common sense gun safety bills in Maine.