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Testimony of Rep. Kristen Cloutier in support of LD 805, An Act To Allow Municipalities To Prohibit Firearms at Voting Places Before the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government

Senator Baldacci, Representative Matlack and members of the State and Local Government Committee:

My name is Kristen Cloutier and I represent House District 60, part of Lewiston. I offer this testimony in support of **LD 805, An Act To Allow Municipalities To Prohibit Firearms at Voting Places**.

The premise of LD 805 is simple. It authorizes municipal officers to prohibit the possession and display of firearms at voting places on election day, with exceptions for firearms secured in locked vehicles and carried by certified law enforcement officers. The proposed legislation would not automatically prohibit guns at voting places across the board, but would allow officials in each municipality to make that choice for themselves.

While this bill would have little impact on my own community, as most of our polling places are located on public school grounds which prohibit firearms, that is not the case in many Maine cities and towns. Under the current law, municipal officials are helpless to enact such restrictions. Despite Maine's constitutional provision favoring home rule by municipalities, the Legislature has prohibited counties, municipalities and political subdivisions of the State from regulating firearms, except for hunting within a municipality (25 M.R.S.A. § 2011).

In recent history we have seen anti-lockdown demonstrations at state capitols across the country where heavily armed protesters marched through buildings intimidating lawmakers. Just five short months ago, we watched in horror as heavily armed protestors lead an insurrection on our nation's capital. These are events that none of us thought we would see in our lifetimes and ones that none of us wishes to see again. What makes us think that such events won't happen at our polling places on election day?

The State Legislature has adopted and strictly enforces rules prohibiting guns in the State House or at legislative committee hearings and meetings. Why should our municipal buildings and

meetings be any different? Isn't the safety of our local officials, employees and neighbors just as important?

As a former municipal official, I urge the committee to support this reasonable measure to keep our residents safe while exercising their civic right and responsibility.

Thank you.