



THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN MAINE

Loring House

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April 12, 2021

Senator Baldacci, Representative Matlack, and Members of the State and Local Government Committee, my name is John Hennessy and I represent the Episcopal Diocese of Maine. Today, I am offering testimony on behalf of **Episcopal Peace Fellowship – Maine** in support of LD 805 – An Act to Allow Municipalities to Prohibit Firearms in a Voting Place.

We believe the epidemic of gun violence in our country now threatens not just individual Americans, but also our democracy. [Episcopal Peace Fellowship](#) and [Bishops United Against Gun Violence](#) supports sensible gun reform, and we look forward to working with elected leaders of both political parties to bring about meaningful change in our state's gun laws.

In these tense times, we believe no one in Maine should ever be threatened with guns especially while exercising their right to vote. Armed intimidation at the polls amounts to voter suppression and harassment which is unlawful. We believe we have a moral obligation to condemn these efforts and join with gun violence prevention advocates and voting rights advocates in urging you to pass this important legislation now. Your action will uphold the integrity of our elections and strengthen our democracy.

The risk of armed intimidators at the polls is not an abstract concern — it is an unfortunate reality that has been perpetuated by leaders who are emboldening, rather than denouncing this type of behavior, and it must be thoughtfully and firmly addressed immediately to prevent further violence and voter suppression.

Whether intended or not, the mere presence of guns at or around polling places threatens voters' emotional and physical well-being — particularly in a nation where 58% of [American adults](#) report that they or someone they care for has been impacted by gun violence.

Please vote Ought to Pass on LD 805.

FYI: A new report by the [Coalition to Stop Gun Violence](#) (CSGV) and [Guns Down America](#) – “[Guns Down At The Polls: How States Can and Should Limit Firearms at Polling Places](#)” – explores numerous examples of gun-based intimidation occurring at polling places in states in 2016 and 2018 and identifies tools available to help state and local officials keep voters safe and prevent armed intimidation at the polls.