

Senator Baldacci, Representative Matlack, and members of the Committee on State and Local Government, my name is Nacole Palmer, and I live in Bowdoin. I am an educator and a professional classical musician.

I want to speak with you about LD 805. We have heard a bit of noise today about various constitutional rights and amendments. The constant noise surrounding these bills is not accidental. Various interests, especially the interests that make money from the gun industry, want to make sure there is as much noise as possible surrounding any gun safety bill, however modest or small, because they want to distract you from the truth. These interests are less concerned with truth than they are with profits, but I am far more concerned with truth. And I'm hoping there are enough of you who are concerned with truth to see what is really going on here.

Here is a statement that is true: there are already many limits to the 2nd Amendment relating to where arms can be carried that are currently a part of legal and customary practice; these limitations include schools, state government buildings such as the Augusta State House, and privately owned businesses. So clearly, it is not unconstitutional to disallow guns in certain places, especially in places where sacred acts, such as voting, take place. We know this because it is currently happening.

The argument that this bill is part of some big scary plot to prevent Mainers from exercising their constitutional rights is, quite simply, a Red Herring. (According to wikipedia, a Red Herring is something that is misleading or is intended to be misleading or distracting.) The people making that argument don't want you to know that most people in Maine (like myself) are already subject to the restrictions this bill would allow because we vote in schools, which already have a restriction on carrying weapons. So not only has this bill already been deemed constitutional, but the bill is necessarily modest in scope because the restriction is already in place for many Mainers when they visit their voting locations.

Allowing municipalities the ability to make the decision that best fits their local community is a common sense approach to the issue of firearms in voting places, and this bill, because it is NOT one size fits all, is the best of all worlds.

The ability to cast a vote without fear of intimidation is central to the functioning of our democracy. With recent threats to that sacred right, it is incumbent upon the leaders (that's you!) of Maine to do everything possible to ensure that citizens feel safe and unthreatened when they cast their ballots, exercising their first Amendment rights.

Your vote in favor of 805 will be a vote for: a) a constitutional approach that is already a part of existing law that b) respects local sovereignty and c) maintains voting integrity for Maine citizens. It is a triple win for Maine, and I hope that it will win your support.

Thank you.