

February 20, 2024

Testimony in favor of **Gun Safety Legislation**
LD 2086, LD 2119, LD 2224, and LD 2238

Greetings Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and honorable members of the Committee on Judiciary. My name is Chris McLaughlin, and I am humbled to be the Executive Director of the Maine Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW ME). On behalf of our over 1000 members here in Maine, I'm honored to share thoughts on this important piece of proposed legislation. I also am a licensed clinical social worker with almost 25 years of experience providing and leading behavioral health services across a variety of treatment settings here in Maine. Most of my clinical career has been spent supporting children and families residing here in our great state.

NASW ME would like to take this time and offer our support on several pieces of important gun safety legislation that are coming before you. LD 2086, LD 2119, LD 2224, and LD 2238 represent wonderful common sense measures that our state can enact to help curb the tragic spread of gun violence across Maine. As you know, the United States faces an epidemic of gun violence. Approximately 41,000 Americans die from gun violence each year. Horrifically, gun violence is now the leading cause of death for American children. Maine now has the highest gun death rate in New England. What happened in Lewiston on October 25, 2023 was sadly NOT an isolated incident. We have seen gun deaths, both homicides and suicides, rise all over Maine. Despite these statistics, though, Maine's current gun laws are comparatively quite weak. The bills referenced above will address critical gaps in Maine's public safety laws and frankly, can save lives from gun violence while also preserving Maine's strong traditions of responsible gun ownership and respect for the Second Amendment. NASW ME believes that both of these things can exist at the same time: Safety and Freedom.

On behalf of social workers from all across Maine, I urge the Committee to vote Ought to Pass on these essential pieces of proposed legislation.

Thank you for your time and consideration,



Chris McLaughlin, MSW, LCSW
Executive Director, Maine Chapter – NASW