



Testimony before the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

**An Act to Strengthen Public Safety by Improving Maine's Firearm Laws and Mental Health System
An Act to Address Gun Violence in Maine by Requiring a Waiting Period for Certain Firearm Purchases**

March 7, 2024

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen and Members of the Committee:

I am Jane Field, Executive Director of the Maine Council of Churches, testifying on behalf of the Council **in support of LD 2224 and LD 2238.**

On Tuesday, I told you about the unprecedented outpouring of concern and demands for passing gun safety legislation that we have been hearing from churches across Maine, and I explained this was because of our deepest held beliefs and core values.

There is another reason: in any church anywhere in Maine you will find people in the pews, and clergy in the pulpits, who have been directly, profoundly, impacted by gun violence. And I am one of them.

Because in 2012 I was serving churches one town over from Sandy Hook and witnessed firsthand the horrific trauma and pain that shooting caused.

And then there's what happened to my best friend, an extraordinary Harvard Law graduate, brilliant criminal law professor, author, NPR commentator, wife, mother of two kids. Suddenly and inexplicably, her mental health deteriorated, she became suicidal, and was hospitalized. After ten days, she was discharged and sent to an outpatient program. The next morning, after her family dropped her off at a yoga class the doctor had recommended, she walked down the street, into a gun shop, and less than 24 hours after being discharged from a locked psych ward, she bought a handgun, completely legally, because there was no red (or even yellow) flag law, no ERPO, and no waiting period. The next day she used the gun to kill herself.

We who have endured such heartache and loss are asking: ***why in God's name*** wouldn't we pass common sense gun safety legislation that has been proven to reduce the risk of gun violence? Legislation like LD 2224 and LD 2238. And we are asking you to vote Ought To Pass.