

Maine Bill Introductions Talking Points

February 2024

If You Say One Thing:

- Following the two devastating and preventable mass shootings in Lewiston and Bowdoin in 2023, volunteers with Moms Demand Action have been on the frontlines advocating for Maine lawmakers to enact critical legislation to prevent future tragedies in the Pine Tree State. Maine currently ranks [25th in the country](#) for strength of its gun laws, behind many of its New England neighbors.
- We're grateful that our lawmakers recently introduced three measures, in addition to the Governor's proposals, this session that would protect our communities from gun violence and keep guns out of the hands of those in crisis and keep our communities safe. These measures include:
 - A required 72-hour waiting periods for firearms purchases,
 - A prohibition on devices that enable semiautomatic firearms to function like machine guns including auto sears and bump stocks, and
 - Creating An Office of Violence Prevention.
- We are hopeful that we can build on this progress and that the passage of stronger gun violence prevention legislation will no longer be out of reach in Maine. We see these bills as the first step towards strengthening our gun laws in Maine and hope that our lawmakers and Governor Mills will continue working together to enact laws that will help keep us safe.

Supporting Points:

- Maine continues to see high, and increasing, firearm suicide rates, and has seen an [increase](#) in the overall rate of gun deaths between 2012 and 2021. In 2023 alone, Maine saw two devastating and preventable mass shootings in Lewiston and Bowdoin. These tragedies are unfortunately painful reminders of what happens when we don't have common-sense gun safety laws in place like an Extreme Risk Protection law that can keep guns out of the hands of individuals in crisis or those who pose a threat to themselves and others.
- We know we can respect the right to own a firearm for personal protection, hunting, and other lawful uses while making sure we have common-sense laws in place to keep guns out of the wrong hands and prevent dangerous weapons from flooding our communities. We hope that Governor Mills and our lawmakers will work together to enact strong gun safety measures into law. It is critical for the safety of our communities that these long overdue measures become law.

About Waiting Periods

- To address Maine's sobering firearm suicide rate, our Senators introduced legislation to implement a 72-hour waiting period before a person can take possession of a firearm after

purchasing it ([LD 2238](#)). Waiting period laws [are associated](#) with reduced suicide rates – as this time creates a critical buffer between someone having a suicidal crisis and access to a gun.

- In [a study](#) that analyzed the time period between 2013 and 2014, these laws were correlated with a decrease in suicide rates in the states with mandatory waiting period laws, while states without these laws saw an increase in suicide rates over the same time period.
- Research shows us that the vast majority of people who survive a suicide attempt [do not](#) go on to die by suicide. Waiting periods are a critical tool to allow someone experiencing a crisis a second chance at life.
- If our lawmakers want to take a comprehensive public health and public safety approach to the issue of gun violence prevention, enacting waiting periods before firearm purchases are critical tools that can be the difference between life and death for anyone contemplating suicide.

About Bump Stocks & Auto Sears

- Our Senate lawmakers also introduced a measure that would ban the sale, purchase and transfer of bump stocks, auto sears and other devices whose sole purpose is to enable semiautomatic firearms to fire like machine guns. With the power to allow semi-automatic firearms to fire hundreds of rounds per minute it is critical that our lawmakers do as much as possible to prevent these dangerous accessories from being able to do even more damage.
- A bump stock is a device that harnesses the recoil of a semiautomatic rifle, enabling it to continually fire several shots in rapid succession, mimicking automatic fire and making these weapons significantly more lethal. Auto sears are another type of deadly rapid fire device that can convert semi automatic handguns into fully automatic weapons, which fire shots continually with one pull of the trigger.
 - Bump stocks were used in the mass shooting at the Route 91 Harvest Music Festival in Las Vegas in 2017, in what remains the deadliest mass shooting in modern U.S. history.
- Machine guns have been tightly regulated under federal law since the 1930s, but bump stocks and other conversion devices are designed to skirt the law and mimic automatic gunfire and can increase the lethality of shootings. In 2019, the ATF finalized a rule clarifying that these dangerous devices qualify as machine guns under federal law and may not be purchased by civilians, but this is being challenged by the gun lobby and debated by the Supreme Court.
 - We are glad that our state lawmakers have stepped up to introduce a ban on bump stocks while this is being debated at the federal level.

About an Office of Violence Prevention

- The Maine House also introduced an omnibus bill that would create an Office of Violence Prevention to fund and coordinate trauma-informed violence intervention efforts and educate the public on responsible gun ownership ([LD 2237](#)).
 - It would also fund and expand several different suicide prevention approaches, including 988 lines and mobile crisis intervention units.
- This office would also establish a grant program to award grants to community violence intervention programs, which would support the success of these groups as they address gun violence in their communities. Community violence intervention programs are effective tools to service at-risk communities and prevent cycles of gun violence that are all too common in neighborhoods across the state.
 - These programs are on the frontlines in the cities grappling with the highest rates of gun violence and communities experiencing the disproportionate impact of gun violence, providing lifesaving interventions that have been shown to make communities safer.
- We are grateful that our lawmakers recognize that the crisis of gun violence requires public safety and public health solutions to keep our communities safe. This measure will take a whole-of-government approach that involves mental health experts, lawmakers and community partners to ensure that we are all working together to address gun violence.

About Governor Mills' Bill

- Governor Mills' proposals to address the public safety and public health implications of the gun violence epidemic in Maine are important first steps towards strengthening the gun safety laws we currently have in place and improving support for mental health resources in the state through establishing a violence prevention program at the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention, and strengthening Maine's mental health system by expanding crisis receiving centers.
- We believe the most significant component of Governor Mills' proposal is the provision to require background checks on unlicensed gun sales, ensuring that all gun buyers undergo a background check facilitated by a federally licensed firearm dealer.
- We're hopeful that our lawmakers will work with Governor Mills to ensure that the strongest possible gun violence prevention measures are enacted by the end of this legislative session, including enacting a law that will give Mainers the tools they need to keep guns out of the hands of individuals in crisis, who are at risk of harming themselves or someone else.
 - Governor Mills' proposal would make it easier to get a yellow paper order by allowing courts to consider more kinds of evidence, and by making it easier for law enforcement officers to get mental health assessments for people in crisis.
 - However, these fixes will not give Mainers what they need—a comprehensive extreme risk law. Such a law would create a process by which those who recognize dangerous warning signs can act quickly to save lives, by directly

petitioning a court to ensure that anyone who, for any reason, poses an immediate threat of harming themselves or others does not have access to firearms. .

ONLY IF ASKED ABOUT AN ASSAULT WEAPONS BAN / OTHER BILLS

- These bills are a great first step and prove that stronger gun safety laws are not out of reach in Maine – we can have both responsible gun ownership and strong gun violence prevention laws in our state.
- The introduction of these bills are the starting point of what can be accomplished in Maine this legislative session and for years to come. It is clear that our lawmakers recognize the importance of keeping deadly weapons out of our communities and the hands of those who could pose a danger to themselves or others – now it's time to get to work.

Statistics About Maine

- In an average year, 163 people die by guns in Maine.
- With a rate of 11.2 deaths per 100,000 people,
- Maine has the 39th-highest rate of gun deaths in the US.
- More information about gun violence in Maine is available [here](#).