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Statement in Support of
**L.D. 1312, An Act Regarding Access to Firearms
by Extremely Dangerous and Suicidal Individuals**
Submitted by Chief Douglas Bracy
April 22, 2019

Gun violence in America has no single cause, and it manifests itself in many ways, including gang warfare, suicide, domestic abuse, and mass shootings in public places. No one law or action can put an end to all gun violence. But the fact that we cannot find a perfect solution does not justify inaction. There are situations where the bill before you today could make the difference between life and death.

As of a year ago, there had been 26 mass shootings in America in which 10 or more persons were killed since 1949. But only three of those occurred before 1980, and exactly half of the 26 occurred within just the last decade. Clearly, the rate of mass shootings has increased dramatically in recent years. Perhaps the most shocking of all mass shootings are those that occur at schools where children are supposed to be safe and be educated.

Following the mass killings at Columbine High School in 1999, the National Threat Assessment Center of the United States Secret Service conducted a study¹ of 37 school shootings involving 41 shooters. Among their findings were these:

- *Incidents of targeted violence at school were rarely sudden, impulsive acts.*
- *Prior to most incidents, other people knew about the attacker's idea and/or plan to attack.*
- *Most attackers engaged in some behavior prior to the incident that caused others concern or indicated a need for help.*
- *Most attackers had access to and had used weapons prior to the attack.*

¹ USSS Safe School Initiative: An Interim Report on the Prevention of Targeted Violence in Schools (Washington, DC: U.S. Secret Service, National Threat Assessment Center, 2000).

Some of the deadliest school shootings occurred after the Secret Service study was conducted and follow this same pattern, including Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, CT, and Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, FL.

The bill before you today could make a difference by heading off mass shootings of this nature. But perhaps even more likely is that it could prevent deaths and serious injury not as dramatic as a mass shootings. Suicide by firearms and the use of guns in domestic violence disputes are far more common in Maine than mass shootings. L.D. 1312 could also prevent some suicides by gun, because suicidal persons may exhibit the same signs as those listed in the Secret Service's report on school shootings.

L.D. 1312 contains the following key provisions that prevent abuse of the issuance of community protection orders:

- **Due process** – A court must examine evidence before issuing a community protection order. The petitioner, not the subject of the petition, bears the burden of proof. It is highly unlikely that such orders will be issued for baseless charges by a vengeful relative or domestic partner.
- **Firearms retention** – Firearms may be retained only temporarily and shall be returned to their rightful owner.

Maine Chiefs of Police Association urges that this committee give L.D. 1312 its unanimous support.