

Testimony in support of LD 759

"An Act To Amend the Child Endangerment Laws To Include Certain Unauthorized Access to a Loaded Firearm"

Sponsored by **Representative Victoria Doudera**

Sen. Deschambault, Rep. Warren and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice & Public Safety:

My name is Deborah Crump. I am a resident of West Paris and am testifying in support of LD 759. I submit these remarks as a representative of the Maine Unitarian Universalist State Advocacy Network, a faith based organization which affirms and promotes justice, equity and compassion in human relations, and the inherent worth and dignity of every person.

My faith motivates me to speak on behalf of vulnerable children whose safety may be threatened when they have access to firearms, which they may fire unintentionally at themselves or someone else, or as a means of suicide.

Last week, the teenage daughter of a friend used a gun to take her own life. This tragic event has affected me profoundly as well as many people I know and is the reason I am passionate about this legislation. Available statistics show that among Mainers ages 10-24, suicide was the second leading cause of death, and firearms were the most frequent method used. Because this bill would decrease the access to firearms for all children in Maine, it would reduce the risk of suicide among teens.

By expanding the state's existing child endangerment statute to include those who leave unsecured firearms around children, Maine would join 14 states that have passed similar laws, which provide that if a minor accesses a firearm, the person who failed to adequately secure the firearm is liable. Studies show that laws requiring the safe storage of firearms are the most effective method of reducing firearm fatalities. I urge you to support LD 759 as a deterrent to gun access by children.

Deborah Crump
Maine Unitarian Universalist State Advocacy Network

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