



THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN MAINE

Loring House

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April 20, 2021

Senator Deschambault, Representative Warren, and Members of the Criminal Justice Committee, my name is John Hennessy and I represent the Episcopal Diocese of Maine. Today, I am offering testimony on behalf of Episcopal Peace Fellowship and Bishops United Against Gun Violence in **support** of LD 759 – An Act to Amend the Child Endangerment Law to Include Certain Unauthorized Access to a Loaded Firearm.

We believe in a God of life in the face of death who calls our church to speak and act decisively against the unholy trinity of poverty, racism and violence. Our faith traditions, sacred texts and baptismal covenant all call on us to engage in peacemaking, and in actions that honor the worth and dignity of every human being.

[It's reported more than 4.6 million American children live in homes with unsecured guns.](#) The same report goes on to say that eight children and teens are killed or injured in accidental shootings involving an improperly stored gun each day in America.

The Episcopal Church is committed to building a just earth where all persons —especially our children—regardless of race, creed, color, gender or sexual expression can live and thrive into the fullness of their created humanity without the fear of violence—with guns posing one of the greatest violent threats. The General Convention asks Episcopalians to prayerfully consider making our homes and vehicles safe for everyone, especially children, by more adequate education to all our family members on safe and responsible use of guns and in strict safety measures for keeping guns out of the reach of young people.

This bill amends the Maine Criminal Code to specify that storing or leaving a loaded firearm on premises under a person's control when the person knows or reasonably should know that a child is likely to gain access to that firearm, and the child in fact gains access to the loaded firearm and uses it, is considered endangering the welfare of a child and is a Class D crime. The bill provides a number of affirmative defenses to the crime, including that the firearm is stored in a locked box or locked gun safe, the child uses the firearm in self-defense or defense of others, the person has no reasonable expectation that a child will be on the premises and the firearm is obtained by the child as the result of a crime.

The American Medical Association estimates that safe storage of firearms could prevent up to 32% of youth gun deaths. If by our collective actions we save even just one person's life, it will be truly worthy of our efforts. Please support LD 759.