

To: Senator Colleen M. Lachowicz, Chair
Representative Anne P. Graham, Chair
Members of the Committee on State and Local Government
From: Michael J. Sauschuck, Chief of the Portland Police Department
Date: April 8, 2013
Re: LD 1122, An Act Allowing Municipalities to Enact Firearms Policies in
Local Government Buildings

I am here today to speak in support of LD 1122, An Act Allowing Municipalities to Enact Firearms Policies in Local Government Buildings. This bill is an important and reasonable method of addressing at the local level the carrying of firearms in municipal offices and legislative chambers. The security and vulnerability of public officials, staff and visitors in government buildings has always been of concern, but has achieved a heightened status in the aftermath of the recent mass shootings in our country. Those incidents highlight the need to allow municipalities to limit access to firearms in government buildings.

This amendment will ensure the consistent implementation of the State laws regarding firearms while correcting the inconsistency between the restrictions regarding the carrying of firearms in the area of the State House and the inability of municipalities to manage similar concerns. The requirement that any firearm prohibition be posted prominently outside of the municipal building ensures that anyone entering the building will be aware of the restriction.

Portland City Hall is the working heart of Maine's largest municipality but more importantly, it is Portland's community forum. It is imperative for citizens to feel entitled to safely express their viewpoints, concerns, disagreements and differences within the City Council chambers.

Last Christmas Eve, within days of the Newtown, Connecticut shootings, a man openly carried an assault rifle through Portland's neighborhoods. Our dispatch center was immediately flooded with calls from concerned and shocked citizens. Officers responded and spoke with the man, who refused to identify himself. He merely stated that he was exercising his right under Maine law to openly carry a firearm in public. Had he decided to go to City Hall and roam those halls and offices, we would have been unable to prevent it.

This bill will strengthen our ability as law enforcement officers to keep our citizens safe. I sincerely support its passage.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on LD No. 1122. I hope that my thoughts are of some help to the committee.