

Testimony in support of LDs 379, 1033, 747, 810, 1276, 1569, 1071, 516, 1099

May 10, 2019

Senator Deschambault, Representative Warren, and esteemed members of the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety,

My name is Grace Leavitt. I am a high school Spanish teacher, National Board Certified, on leave from MSAD #51 to serve as President of the Maine Education Association, representing nearly 24,000 educators in Maine.

I am writing to testify in support of eight of the LDs before you today, as follows:

LD 379, “An Act to Protect Children by Requiring the Safe Storage of Loaded Firearms”,

LD 1033, “An Act to Protect Children from Accidental Injury Due to Unsafe Storage of Firearms”,

LD 747, “An Act to Promote the Safe Use and Sale of Firearms”,

LD 810, “An Act to Require Background Checks for All Private Firearm Sales or Transfers Except between Family Members”,

LD 1276, “An Act to Better Enforce the Prohibition against Dangerous Persons Possessing Firearms”,

LD 1569, “An Act to Prohibit Untraceable and Undetectable Firearms”,

LD 1071, An Act to Prohibit the Sale of High-capacity Magazines”,

LD 516, “An Act to Establish a Statewide Voluntary Firearm Collection Day and Ongoing Program”, and lastly,

LD 1099, “An Act to Reduce Suicides and Violent Crimes by Requiring a 72-hour Waiting Period after the sale of a Firearm”.

One. One student shot and killed in the most recent school shooting, in Colorado earlier this week.

Eight. The number of students injured in that horrific event.

Millions. The “thoughts and prayers” that follow each such events.

Forty-two. The number of educators who have given their lives “in the line of duty” just since the year 2000. These names, along with the names of 65 other educators who were killed in school tragedies prior to the year 2000—all of these names are now inscribed on two large pieces of marble at the National Memorial to Fallen Educators. Not all died as a result of guns, but the organization is seeking donations because a third piece of marble is now needed. There are more names to add; if something does not change to help keep our students and our schools and our communities safer, will a fourth be needed?

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How many pieces of marble would be needed if there were such a memorial for the students who have been killed in such tragedies?

How many if there were such a memorial for all who fell victim to a violent act involving guns?

Ninety-four. The number of school gun violence incidents last year—“a record high since 1970, which is as far back as the data goes, and 59 percent higher than the previous record of 59 in 2006”.

(<https://www.vox.com/2018/12/10/18134232/gun-violence-schools-mass-shootings>)

According to the “Gun Violence Archive”, before the shooting this week, there were 18,258 incidents of gun violence reported so far this year. So far. It is the tenth day of the fifth month of 2019.

(<https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/>)

According to Everytown Research, “every day 100 Americans are killed with guns and hundreds more are shot and injured”. (<https://everytownresearch.org/gun-violence-america/>)

Last week I was at a meeting with the presidents of other state affiliates of the National Education Association. The President of the Colorado Education Association was talking to me about the recent situation in which there was a credible threat of violence against schools in the Denver area, the schools were closed, a manhunt for the person who had made the threat was conducted, and finally the person who had made the threat was found; she had committed suicide.

The President of CEA has three young children. Her husband is a school teacher. Her youngest child kept asking why would a “bad person” want to kill teachers. Her child woke up every night for the next week having had nightmares. He was terrified that something would happen to his daddy.

Imagine the trauma that each of these incidents, even the threat of one, causes for the children and the families involved.

Please support LD 379 and 1033 and help to keep loaded firearms out of the hands of children.

Please support LD 747, 810, and 1276 and help to keep firearms out of the hands of anyone who should be prohibited from having one.

Please support LD 1569 and 1071 to help to keep untraceable, undetectable firearms and high-capacity magazines out of anyone's hands.

Please support LD 516 to help reduce the number of firearms that are out in the public and could fall into the wrong hands.

Please support LD 1099 to help keep firearms out of the hands of someone who may be having suicidal thoughts.

Please do all you can in your important role as legislators to keep people in our state safe from gun violence. Our students, our educators, and our communities are counting on you to do more than offer thoughts and prayers.

We are counting on you to help reduce the horrible statistics on these tragic events.