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Senator Deschambault, Rep. Warren and members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee. My name is Lynn Ellis and I live in Brunswick. I speak today in support of LD 1861, An Act to Establish the Safe Homes Program

I have spoken to this committee in the past year on bills regarding gun safety and safe storage, particularly LD 759 which was enacted. I am pleased to see a bill like LD 1861 that is a bipartisan effort to address safe storage to protect our children, our veterans and others in our state who are most vulnerable. In Maine, 90% of gun deaths are suicides. The importance of raising awareness to the dangers of accessing firearms, drugs and other weapons that can cause them harm is essential. Today I speak as a member of my faith community and the statewide legislative ministry organization that is called the Maine Unitarian Universalist State Advocacy Network (MUUSAN). We represent UU churches across the state in addressing issues of public health, racial & native justice, oppression and climate action. UUs have influenced public policy and raised awareness for decades. In 2014 our national organization Unitarian Universalist Association put forth a call to congregations in what is called a statement of conscience. I have attached it to my written testimony but will read just a few sections here:

BE IT RESOLVED, That the 2014 General Assembly endorses renewing the focus and call for congregational commitment to work for gun violence prevention initiatives.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the 2014 General Assembly encourages member congregations to take action, such as:

1. Urging the Center for Disease Control to study and publish data on gun violence. (such as Rep. Gramlich's bill LD 1392 in the last session)
2. Working for gun safety, background checks and a ban on assault weapons on a national, state, and municipal levels
3. Reaching out to partner with interfaith groups and community activists
4. Speaking with police, local public health professionals, elected officials and candidates for office; and
5. Speaking out in local forums, town meetings and media.

As an alumni of the UNE School of Social Work where solution focused practices are taught, I have long believed that finding preventive methods to prevent harm and tragedy are far preferable to trying to repair often irreparable damage. In the case of our children, I am grateful to the sponsors of this bill to educate and raise awareness on safe storage to all gun owners in Maine. My only suggestion is to have every month be Safe Homes Awareness Month. Thank you for your time.



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Sincerely,
Lynn Ellis