

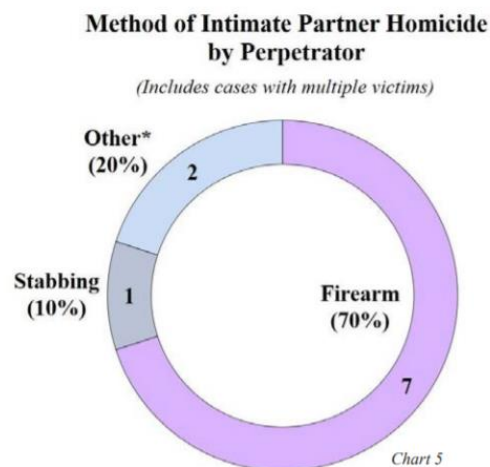
May 3, 2021

Dear Senator Deschambault, Representative Warren, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety;

I join you today on behalf of the Maine Women's Lobby. For over forty years, the Maine Women's Lobby has advocated for public policy which increases the health, wellness, safety, and economic security of Maine women and girls, with a focus on the most marginalized populations and communities.

We are here today **in support of LD 999, "An Act Regarding Background Checks for the Sale of Firearms."** and we thank Representative Ross for sponsoring this bill.

**Women in the United States are 21 times more likely to be murdered with a gun than women in other high-income countries<sup>1</sup>, and access to firearms is a key driver of that murder rate.** 92% of all women killed with guns in high-income countries in 2015 were from the US.<sup>2</sup>



Over half of female victims of intimate partner homicide in the US are killed with a gun,<sup>3</sup> which translates to an average of 57 women shot and killed by an intimate partner every month in the US.<sup>4</sup> About 4.5 million women in the US in 2018 report having been threatened with a gun by an intimate partner.<sup>5</sup>

In Maine, the 2020-21 Domestic Abuse Homicide Review Panel reports that in the last two years, **70% of intimate partner homicides, including cases with multiple victims, firearms were used. In the Panel's 20 years of biennial reviews, people who commit domestic abuse related homicide have used firearms more than any other method to kill.** In current biennium cases, 40% (8 of 20) of perpetrators used firearms and 60% (12 of 20) had legal access to or owned firearms. In the

<sup>1</sup> Erin Grinshteyn and David Hemenway, "Violent Death Rates in the US Compared to Those of the Other High-income Countries, 2015," *Preventive Medicine* 123, (2019): 20–26.

<sup>2</sup> Grinshteyn E., & Hemenway D. "Violent death rates in the US compared to those of the other high-income countries, 2015". *Preventive Medicine*. (2019). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ypmed.2019.02.026>

<sup>3</sup> <https://everytownresearch.org/report/guns-and-violence-against-women-americas-uniquely-lethal-intimate-partner-violence-problem/#the-nexus-of-intimate-partner-violence-and-guns>

<sup>4</sup>Supplementary Homicide Reports, 1976-2019. Kaplan, Jacob concatenated files as posted on: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributor], 2021-01-16. <https://doi.org/10.3886/E100699V10>.

<sup>5</sup> Sorenson, S. B., & Schut, R. A. "Nonfatal Gun Use in Intimate Partner Violence: A Systematic Review of the Literature". *Trauma, Violence & Abuse*. (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838016668589>



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**LD 999 can change this trajectory. Background checks impose virtually no inconvenience on law-abiding citizens. They are widely supported, easy to comply with, and most importantly, they save lives.** In fact, eight in ten firearms purchased for criminal purchases were purchased from an unlicensed dealer.<sup>6</sup>

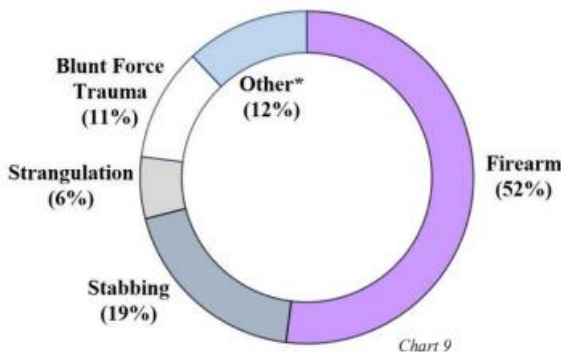
**For too long, the safety and very lives of women and children have taken a backseat to the interests of the gun lobby.** We know that limiting access to firearms saves lives in cases of domestic violence – that is why we have had limits on purchase and possession of firearms for abusers in Maine for years. We know that background checks work – that is why we have had background checks in Maine for years. And we know that we can close these loopholes and create universal background checks without infringing on the rights of people to purchase guns. It is time to put safety and common sense first and extend our existing laws to cover all buyers and sellers of firearms. **This is an easy way to save lives.**

**We hope you will vote 'ought to pass' on LD 999.**

Destie Hohman Sprague, Executive Director

*Chart here and above from the 2020-2021 Attorney General's Homicide Review Panel Report:*

**Method of Domestic Abuse Homicide by 129 Offenders**  
(N=136; 5 perpetrators used multiple methods of homicide and each are represented below)



\*Other category detailed ahead in intimate partner and intrafamilial homicide data

*Overall, and consistent with national data, males committed the majority of domestic abuse homicides, and the majority used firearms.*

<sup>6</sup> Katherine A. Vittes, Jon S. Vernick, and Daniel W. Webster, "Legal Status and Source of Offenders' Firearms in States with the Least Stringent Criteria for Gun Ownership," Injury Prevention 19, no. 1 (2013): 26-31.