

January 15, 2024



In the wake of the devastating events in Lewiston on October 25th, the undersigned healthcare providers of Maine call on our elected local, state, and federal officials to take immediate and decisive action to address firearm safety. Our hearts ache for the families and friends of those killed or injured, and we grieve alongside them. We are overwhelmed at the thought of our incredible emergency responders and healthcare workers who performed their duties with skill and compassion in the face of chaos and terror. Despite our sadness and shock, we are standing together today, a unified force, to demand change.

Many of us have watched from afar as communities across our nation endured one mass shooting after another. We listened, dumbfounded, as public health researchers informed us that firearm fatalities had surpassed motor vehicle crashes as the leading cause of death among children, adolescents, and young adults. We stood up in protest when, in response to a position paper from the American College of Physicians on reducing firearm injuries and deaths, the NRA told physicians to “stay in their lane.” Now more than ever, we understand the importance of having our voices heard.

Gun violence is a multi-faceted public health issue and deserves a robust public health response. Over the years, as many states across our nation have chosen to either strengthen or weaken firearm regulations, we have amassed a wealth of data on how those measures impacted firearm safety in those states, for better and for worse. As leaders in healthcare, we urge lawmakers to bring us to the table as we call for common-sense gun legislation.

To preempt any arguments that we desire to outlaw all guns, let us be clear. As a diverse group of healthcare providers, we are not anti-gun, we do not seek to infringe on the Second Amendment, and we are not calling for a relinquishment of firearms. We do not seek to deny others their right to possess firearms for hunting, sport, or self-defense, and in fact, many of us are gun owners ourselves. However, we recognize that our current set of laws regarding firearms are woefully inadequate at keeping our communities safe.

There is broad consensus that our nation is undergoing a mental health crisis. This crisis is influenced by a multitude of factors, including stigma and discrimination, a lack of access to care, historical underfunding of mental health services, a worsening opioid epidemic, and an epidemic of loneliness, just to name a few. While we urge greater investment in mental health care and understand that it plays a part in the problem, we also know that addressing mental health will not solve the gun violence epidemic that is unique to the United States of America.

Mass shootings are not the only manifestation of the lack of appropriate firearm legislation in our country. Unintentional firearm injuries, intimate partner violence, suicide, community violence, and illegal gun trafficking all need to be a part of the discussion. Addressing these issues necessitates a comprehensive approach that balances the rights and responsibilities of

gun owners along with public safety. We welcome anyone who wants to come together to protect the lives of our patients, our families, and our communities, to join us in this call for reform.

It's time for us to stand up and take our state's motto, *DIRIGO*, to heart. Maine has an opportunity to lead on this issue, to strike a balance between gun safety and gun ownership and to serve as an example to the nation for how we can make this right.



Current Signature Count: 465

An updated list of our clinician and association signatories can be viewed at <https://www.maineprovidersforgunsafety.com/sign-our-letter>

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