FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
AUGUST 31, 2022
CONTACT PIO SHANNON MOSS
Shannon.Moss@Maine.Gov

Department of Public Safety raises awareness about new Law aimed to keep Mainers safe

September is Safe Homes Awareness Month

A new law that took effect on August 8, 2022, will help Mainers safely secure their prescription drugs and firearms, and other dangerous weapons. The law, which was passed unanimously sponsored by Senator Susan Deschambault, D-Biddeford, and co-sponsored by Representative Richard Pickett, (R) Dixfield establishes the Safe Homes Program. It will educate people on the importance of safe prescription drug and weapons storage. It will also make storage devices more affordable.

Maine has the second highest firearm mortality rate in New England. In 2020, more than 85 percent of gun deaths were suicides. That year, 154 Mainers were killed by firearms, including 132 who died by suicide.

In 2021 there were more than 8,000 overdoses in Maine. 636 were drug deaths, a 20 percent increase over the number of Mainers who died from overdoses in 2020.

“During my final term as Senator I wanted to take action to help make Mainers’ homes safer.” Said Sen. Deschambault. “We need to educate Mainers on the importance of safely storing their prescription drugs and weapons inside their home. We also need to make storage devices more affordable. This law will make Maine homes and families safer.”

“The knowledge and tools to keep and handle personal weapons and prescription drugs is a matter of safety for the individual and the community as a whole said, Rep. Pickett. “As a member of law enforcement for over 40 years, I have seen many cases where both the mishandling of weapons and/or prescription drugs has caused great tragedy to so many.”
The safe storage of weapons can reduce accidental gun-related deaths and keep weapons out of the hands of people who might plan to hurt themselves. The safe storage of prescription drugs can help reduce accidental or misuse of medication.

“The safety of our friends and family is of the utmost importance for all of us and we believe that a program like “Safe Homes” can provide the comprehensive educational space to make our loved ones safer from prescription medications and dangerous weapons,” said Department of Public Safety Commissioner Michael Sauschuck.

Last year, the legislature made storage devices more affordable by creating a sales tax exemption for devices specifically designed for securing firearms. The Safe Homes Program will provide grants for purchasing safety devices for the safe storage of prescription drugs and weapons, as available.

Governor Janet Mills has also signed a proclamation declaring September Safe Homes Awareness Month as a way to raise awareness about the importance of safety in the home and the existence of the program.

For more information on the Safe Homes Program please visit https://sites.google.com/view/dps-safe-homes/home