



## *South Berwick Police Dept.*

1 FARMGATE ROAD  
SOUTH BERWICK, MAINE 03908  
TEL. 207-384-2254  
FAX: 207-384-3305

Date: 03/10/2023

To: Sen. Beebe-Center, Rep. Salisbury, and distinguished members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee

From: Chief David S. Ruger

Reference: LD 673 – *An Act to Direct the Maine Criminal Justice Academy to Develop a Non-Residential Law Enforcement Training Program*

---

I am writing this in support of LD 673. I am a graduate of the non-residential 95<sup>th</sup> Maine Criminal Basic Police School held in Portland, Maine. Many of the cadets I attended class with in 2001 are now sergeants and/or administrators. I have always believed the non-residential academies will—and do—provide the same curriculum as the residential BLEPT and produce the same educated/trained officers that the new BLEPT produces. At no time after graduation from the police academy do officers get sent off on long term deployments like in the military, so I ask why we deploy officers away for 18 weeks away from their support of family and loved ones. The cadets will still receive the same education as a residential academy and in no way will a non-residential academy hinder a career.

York Police Chief Owen Davis and I are just two examples that non-residential police academies produce highly trained and educated long-term career officers that rose through the ranks.

Many other states provide a collegiate style academy that produce well trained officers that fulfill long-term careers. These same non-residential officers rise throughout the ranks and flourish as future leaders and administrators. So, I ask, why is Maine so particular about a residential academy?

The MCJA has two sessions per year which generally a new candidate will have to wait 6 months to a year before they are accepted into the BLEPT program. Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) accredited departments have guidelines that prohibit new candidates from working as a police officer until they graduate from the basic police academy or risk losing their certification. This gold standard agency certification is important to residents and demonstrated commitment to community-oriented policing philosophies. The candidate pool during these post-COVID times is extremely limited, and if a candidate simply cannot wait to get their career started at a CALEA based department, then they simply move on to another agency that allows part-time certified officers to work a full schedule until they can attend the academy.

I know there has been talk about sending our candidates to possibly New Hampshire, which has a non-residential academy, or another state and having the MCJA waive the certification so there would be a minimal wait time to get a new officer trained. Why does Maine waive non-residential academies from other states? MCJA are saying those non-residential academies are equal to the Maine residential academy, while also saying adopting such a model is lowering the standards in Maine. The waiving process is lopsided when you are looking at from the outside in. I find that Maine needs to loosen up the “good ole boy” attitude that we are better not different. Officers will receive the same education and training from a non-residential Maine Police Academy period. If that was not the case, then I would not be in the seat that I currently hold as the Chief of South Berwick Police Department. Thank you for taking the time to read this .

Chief of Police David S. Ruger