



Maine County Commissioners Association

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LD 1280, An Act to Invest in Maine's Fire Service Training Facilities

April 27, 2023

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety, my name is Stephen Gorden and in addition to serving as a member of the board of commissioners for Cumberland County, I am writing today in my role as chair of the legislative policy committee of the Maine County Commissioners Association. We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony to the Committee in support of LD 1280.

About MCCA. Briefly, the Maine County Commissioners Association was established in 1890 to assist Maine's county government in providing vital services to Maine citizens in a responsive, efficient, and credible manner. The Association is based in Augusta, represents all of Maine's 16 counties, and is governed by a board with representation from each participating county.

Discussion. LD 1280 provides General Fund allocations in the amount of \$1 million each for fiscal years 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 to fund fire service training facilities across the State. We support this allocation. Maine fire departments serve citizens in each county across the State, including fire departments within the unorganized territories governed by Maine's counties. Investing in fire service training facilities will ensure that Maine firefighters receive the best possible training and are well prepared for their service throughout the State.

In addition, the challenges of providing Fire and EMS Departments are only growing, as professional requirements and certifications are promulgated and equipment becomes more sophisticated. Departments struggle to hire, train, and keep qualified staff and equipment. While the nature of service calls is changing and becoming more complex, the Chiefs are becoming more concerned about the wellbeing and mental health of their staff. We hear it directly from emergency responders and community leaders: training is absolutely critical.

Turning to the cost of training, towns and cities are looking for ways they may collaborate with each other and their County in order to economically share these burdens and improve the response outcomes for their citizenry. LD 1280 is important because the allocation from the State's general fund also keeps the more of the costs training do not end up with local property taxpayers, which is beneficial. For these reasons, we urge the Committee and the Legislature to support LD 1280.

Conclusion. We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony on this bill, and if you have questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to let us know.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephen Gorden
Chair, Legislative Policy Committee

cc: Commissioner Richard Dutremble, President, MCCA
James I. Cohen, Verrill Dana, LLP, MCCA Legislative Counsel