



# MAINE CHIEFS OF POLICE ASSOCIATION

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## Statement in support of

### **L.D. 2094, Resolve, to Require the Establishment of a Stakeholder Group to Examine and Improve the Recruitment, Retention and Wellness of Law Enforcement Officers**

**January 29, 2024**

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury, and honorable members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee. My name is Jason Moen. I am the Chief of the Auburn Police Department, and the Acting President of the Maine Chiefs of Police Association. I am submitting testimony on behalf of the Maine Chiefs of Police Association in support of LD 2094.

The Mission of the Maine Chiefs of Police Association is to secure a closer official and personal relationship among Maine Police Officials; to secure a unity of action in law enforcement matters; to enhance the standards of police personnel, police training and police professionalism generally; to devise ways and means for equality of law enforcement throughout the state of Maine; to advance the prevention and detection of crime; to prescribe to the Law Enforcement Code of Ethics; and to promote the profession of law enforcement as an integral and dedicated force in today's society sworn to the protection of life and property.

As proposed, this resolve requires the Department of Public Safety to convene a stakeholder group composed of individuals representing law enforcement officers, retired law enforcement officers, criminal justice educators and administrators, private security firms and mental health professionals to examine and propose long-term solutions to improve the recruitment, retention and wellness of law enforcement officers.

As chiefs of law enforcement agencies, we are responsible for the health and safety of our officers. We do everything that we can to protect them against harm's way, both physically and mentally, while in the line of duty and after their shift ends. We train for every situation so that our officers can return home safely at the end of the day. But there no denying that a career in law enforcement can be a high stress and dangerous profession, which can lead to high turnover rates and difficulty in finding qualified and interested individuals to serve in these roles.

The Maine Criminal Justice Academy receives a report annually from every law enforcement and correctional agency statewide a variety of information and statistics related to each department. That data includes information on excessive use of force, mandatory training, mental health identification awareness training, and the adoption of minimum standards and policies. Chief law enforcement officers have also provided the Academy data on the number

of vacant positions in each agency as of December 31, 2022. Statewide, there are 310 full-time law enforcement vacancies, 75 part-time law enforcement vacancies, and 315 part-time corrections vacancies.

These gaps within our law enforcement forces only adds increased pressure and demand on our officers. The work that can be accomplished through the proposed stakeholder group will help provide solutions to find and retain men and women to our law enforcement ranks.

Although the proposed stakeholder group does not include a member of an association representing chiefs of police, we would welcome the opportunity to have a seat at the table. We believe that law enforcement officers currently serving in the line of duty would have valuable perspectives to share to further the work of the group.

On behalf of the Maine Chiefs of Police Association, we thank the Committee for its consideration of this proposal, and we respectfully ask members to pass LD 2094.