



Troy D. Jackson  
President of the Senate

THE MAINE SENATE  
131st Legislature

3 State House Station  
Augusta, Maine 04333

### **Testimony in Support of LD 2094**

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

#### **Presented to the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety**

Thursday, January 29, 2024

Good morning, Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety. My name is Troy Jackson. I have the honor of serving as the President of the Maine Senate and of representing northern Aroostook County in Senate District 1. I am here today to introduce an amended version of LD 2094, "Resolve, to Require the Establishment of a Stakeholder Group to Examine and Improve the Recruitment, Retention and Wellness of Law Enforcement Officers."

Rural communities across the United States are facing a law enforcement staffing crisis, and Maine is no exception. This problem has been slowly building for a long time, but it has accelerated in recent years. Given the widespread nature of the problem, our rural communities are now competing with urban areas to attract applicants, but they can't keep up. Some towns have had to disband their police departments entirely due to the lack of staffing and resources.<sup>1</sup>

Some towns in other states have looked to their county sheriff departments to take over policing duties and this solution has worked for them.<sup>2</sup> And with rural patrols being consistently underfunded since 1977, it's clear that our problems are more far-reaching than the past few years.<sup>3</sup> Our current path will only lead us to further understaffed departments and overburdened officers. And that's not good for anyone.

---

<sup>1</sup> Limestone and Van Buren, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/us-experiencing-police-hiring-crisis-rcna103600>

<sup>2</sup> Washburn, Illinois and Lott, Texas, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/us-experiencing-police-hiring-crisis-rcna103600>

<sup>3</sup> <https://themainemonitor.org/funds-sought-for-more-rural-police-officers/>

We need to explore every possible option to help our local and state law enforcement agencies recruit and retain officers to their forces. This bill will accomplish this by bringing together a stakeholder group to dig into this issue and propose long-term solutions to get us on a better and more sustainable path, both in terms of staffing and in terms of officer wellness. For the membership of this group, I suggest that one edit be made to add sheriffs so that we can ensure that they have a seat at the table.

Thank you for your consideration of this bill. I ask that you support LD 2094 to forge a better path for the future of Maine's law enforcement agencies. I will do my best to answer any questions you may have.