

Testimony of Maine Association of Police Vice President Shane Stephenson

Monday, February 2nd 2025

LD 179 - An Act to Amend the Maine Bail Code to Eliminate the Class E Crime of Violation of Condition of Release

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety,

My name is Shane Stephenson and I am here to hopefully provide some boots-on-the-ground feedback about the impact of passing this bill. I am currently a Vice President for the Maine Association of Police (representing approximately 800 members statewide). Maine Association of Police (MAP) is also part of the Maine Law Enforcement Coalition (representing almost all of the Law Enforcement in the state of Maine). I have been a law enforcement officer for over 15 years and I can tell you that the job has significantly changed in that period. I, along with many other first responders, have noticed a significant decline of society since the passing of bail reform in 2021.

During this period I have seen suspects with 18 sets of bail because the jails often don't hold suspects long enough for the reports to be typed. The catch and release method that has been implemented in Maine has emboldened individuals to commit crimes with little to no consequences. This lack of accountability fosters recidivism because the punishment doesn't outweigh the reward. I've seen countless stores lose thousands of dollars in products in a single case. The idea of certain crimes being "non-violent" is romanticized and the impact of these crimes is minimized. The concept of protecting the greater public at the expense of the person committing an offense is almost no longer a consideration. Unfortunately we are only seeing these charges on paper and ignoring the incidents. We, as a state, are failing to recognize the societal damage that is detailed in the narrative reports generated by officers that care about keeping the community safe.

I've literally seen "drug-deals-gone-bad" that have resulted in a homicide because enforcement of narcotics violations have been greatly reduced. Increased murders, shootings, stabbings, thefts and various other crimes are occurring more frequently due to the constant relaxation of the state laws. California relaxed their laws on shoplifting but figured out quickly that this was the wrong approach. They changed their laws and now are holding shoplifters accountable again. We should use the mistakes of others as knowledge to give us the correct path ahead. We should not be repeating the mistakes of others by further relaxing law and order when Maine already has a laissez-faire approach to crime.

Many in Maine, including my wife and I, are concerned about the current budget issues the state is facing but repealing this law will cost Maine more money than what is noted in the fiscal projection. Businesses will pull out of their retail locations from increased theft and other crimes. Less revenue from businesses will cost the property owners more in taxes. The businesses in my community are getting hit with large losses from thefts.

I have been in the law enforcement profession for over 15 years and I can tell you that the violent crime/high risk calls we are responding to is increasing. The options law enforcement has are

even more limited than when I started. Hospitals are releasing mental health patients in crisis with minimal care and jails/prisons are releasing their residents with minimal penalties. The examples of these releases, where injury or death is a result, are occurring more regularly.

Personally, I had a case where a male was stopped for no seat belt. This male I stopped was a felon, on probation with a probation revocation warrant, in possession of a stolen firearm and was in possession of crack, fentanyl and approximately \$3,700 cash. The male ran from me and another officer and had his hand on the gun before we were able to luckily put him in handcuffs without deploying deadly force. This male was an extreme danger to the public, law enforcement and himself but ultimately only received more probation as punishment. I was told that if he violated then he would get a lengthy punishment but that also did not happen.

In another case, I spoke to my academy Cadre recently and he is allowing me to share his story here today. Almost a year ago Sergeant Randy Williams, from the Androscoggin County Sheriff's Department, underwent surgery for a gunshot wound to his upper right leg. A home was fully ablaze when deputies arrived, followed by a gunman shooting at police and the homeowners as they escorted the family out of the house. Sgt Williams heroic efforts saved many people and put his life at risk with what could have potentially be life threatening injuries. This event could have been prevented if the criminal justice system stopped their catch and release methods that puts the public at risk.

It should be noted that Corey Hamel, the suspect, was on probation for three separate counts of violation of conditional release and is prohibited from carrying a weapon according to reports. It was reported that Hamel has a lengthy criminal record since 1999 with his most recent conviction in 2020 for a domestic violence assault. I can't help but question how someone with such a lengthy criminal history was released for this to happen. Thankfully Hamel will spend 26 years behind bars and I can only hope that he will serve every single day of that sentence. Unfortunately the reckless decisions by the criminal justice system are occurring more frequently. Luckily I am still able to pick up the phone and make plans with Sgt Williams to buy him lunch one day.

I want to thank you for listening to the perspective of the challenges law enforcement faces. I know decisions are made after deep thought, reflective and great purpose in mind. Please know that repealing this section that is a critical tool for law enforcement is not safe for the citizens, not safe for the officers and not safe for the offenders. Instead, my hope is that we can eventually look to strengthen the bail code to create strict penalties for the people that pose repeated risks to their community.

Respectfully submitted,

Shane Stephenson

Vice President

Maine Association of Police

Maine man with long criminal history accused of shooting deputy, starting fire in Minot

by [Brad Rogers](#), WGME

Wed, February 14th 2024 at 9:11 AM

Updated Thu, February 15th 2024 at 5:55 AM





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Corey Hamel (Androscoggin County Jail)

22

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MINOT (WGME) — A Minot man is accused of shooting and wounding an Androscoggin County sergeant and setting a home on fire.

The officer is expected to be okay.

This all started around 4 a.m. Wednesday in Minot when Androscoggin County Sheriff's deputies responded to a disturbance complaint on Woodman Hill Road.

- **Also read:** [Maine man dies after falling on hike in Arizona](#)

Police say when they got there, the home was engulfed in flames.

Maine State Police say Sergeant Randy Williams underwent surgery for a gunshot wound to his upper right leg.



Sergeant Randy Williams (Androscoggin County Sheriff's Office)

Police say he is expected to survive.

A deputy at the scene says it was chaotic early Wednesday morning.

- **Also read:** [Storefront crash in Andover allegedly caused by driver's foot slipping onto wrong pedal](#)

First, a home was fully ablaze when deputies arrived, followed by a gunman shooting at police and the homeowners as they escorted the family out of the house.

Williams was struck by gunfire, as were several patrol cars, as the gunman fired from the end of the driveway.

Deputies and Mechanic Falls officers then confronted the gunman and were able to take him into custody.

Police say the alleged gunman is 42-year-old Corey Hamel of Minot, who has been staying at the residence.

Police say Hamel was on probation for three separate counts of violation of conditional release and is prohibited from carrying a weapon.

Hamel is back behind bars and charged with aggravated attempted murder and arson.

He'll be arraigned on the charges Friday.

There is no word yet as to a possible motive.

READ THE COMMENTS (22)

Hamel has a lengthy criminal record in Maine dating back to 1999. His most recent conviction was in 2020 for a domestic violence assault.

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15 February, 2024

Long criminal history... Once again, I'd like to believe this criminal would get a long sentence, but he'll be back out again and that officer will have suffered for nothing. Like many of our officers suffer for nothing. It's become a thankless job with no results, lots of threats of injury or death...

See more

14 February, 2024

If only we had a way to deal with these career criminals who refuse to follow the law. I guess we just need to create more laws for the people who do.

- • 15 February, 2024

Which defense attorneys are responsible for keeping this guy out of prison? Hope they're proud today.

- • 15 February, 2024

How did a career criminal get a gun? Do gun laws not work?

- • 15 February, 2024

The gunman should have been full of holes when captured. A very slow capture might have better served Maine taxpayers over the long term.

- • 15 February, 2024

Name the State employees who gave him early release.

- • 14 February, 2024

Crunchcoat is going to be so happy it was a white guy. Probably her best Valentines gift in years.

14 February, 2024

Was it another illegal Chinese grow operation?

15 February, 2024

Tough guy now wearing a smock. They get no respect in the joint.