



Maine Chiefs of Police Association

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Statement in support of

L.D. 549, An Act to Establish a Statewide Sexual Assault Forensic Examination Kit Tracking System and Update Certain Requirements Regarding Sexual Assault Forensic Examination Kits

Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

February 26, 2025

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and honorable members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Jason Moen. I am the Chief of the Auburn Police Department, and the 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 549.

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.

This proposal stems from the important work started a few years ago from enacted legislation that created a sexual assault kit tracking pilot program. Last year, the Legislature approved LD 2129, which required the establishment of a statewide sexual assault forensic examination kit tracking system and an inventory of all sexual assault forensic examination kits in the possession of law enforcement agencies. Relevant information would be provided to victims, regardless if they report the assault, and other approved users regarding the processing, custody, analysis and destruction of evidence. Finally, law enforcement agencies that receive, maintain, store, or preserve sexual assault forensic examination kits would be required to complete an inventory of all kits in its possession and report its findings to the Department of Public Safety.

Unfortunately, LD 2129 never made it across the finish line last year. It was one of a handful of bills removed from the Appropriations Table on Veto Day and sent to Governor Mills too late to be signed into law. That is why LD 549 is before the committee today and why we continue to advocate for its passage.

The importance of this tracking and inventory system cannot be stressed enough. Victims of sexual assault have experienced unimaginable harm. We want to ensure that these survivors can easily access real-time data about the status of their own kits, while also getting valuable data statewide on the journey of these kits as they move from healthcare facilities to law enforcement agencies and eventually to the state crime lab. As an emergency measure, passage of this bill will accomplish these goals and will help strengthen Maine's enforcement of sexual assault laws and our overall response to sexual assaults.

To that end, the Maine Crime Lab within the Department of Public Safety must receive appropriate funding by the Legislature to complete this critical work. The worst thing that could happen to sexual assault survivors is provide an unrealistic expectation that they will have reliable access to their kits, only to have processing stalled due to the lack of needed supports for the Crime Lab to carry out this mission.

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 support the passage of LD 549.