



Testimony of Vicki Schmidt, Hebron ME in support of LD 679,  
**An Act to Increase the Funding to the Live Fire Service Training Facilities Fund**

March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2025

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, and distinguished  
members of the Committee On Criminal Justice & Public Safety

Thank you for today's opportunity, I am Vicki Schmidt from Hebron Maine and I serve with the Buckfield Fire Department, a 14-member volunteer department in Western Maine. I also represent Volunteer & On-call Firefighters on the Maine Fire Protection Services Commission.

As a volunteer firefighter and a State Fire Instructor III with the Maine Fire Services Institute for over twenty years. I urge your support and funding of LD679. My experience has given me a very good understanding of what it takes to train, and as importantly maintain, a firefighter at skilled performance standards.

In the seven years since 2018, and the fully unanimous passing and initial funding support of LD 1845 by the 128<sup>th</sup> Maine Legislature, Maine's fire community has worked diligently to reverse the lack of National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) compliant fire training infrastructure for Maine.

The collaborative efforts of Maine firefighters, our professional associations, our instructors, town officials, Maine Fire Services Institute and the Southern Maine Community College have been nothing short of commendable. Every penny of the funding and grant awards is, or is in the process of, being completely used for the repair, replacement, or construction of NFPA compliant Live Fire Training Facilities. Furthermore, the grant design ensures the commitment, integrity, and responsibility for the future longevity of these regional facilities.

The Fire Commission has successfully led this charge and many Commission members have volunteered hundreds of hours to help establish these improvements. The value of the state funding and its return on investment to provide the basis for these facilities can not be under estimated. The funding is significantly leveraged by local towns who secure donations, volunteer time and provide hours of work and services to further amplify the grant funding. This is a fully win-win situation for taxpayers, our town and department, the firefighters of Maine, and most importantly, the citizens and property we are dedicated to protect.

Our State goal for these facilities also provides many inherent values that are not easy to ascertain. One of the most important is the consistency of their design and operation making them more predictable and efficient to teach and instruct with. Instructors and program managers can better plan and manage all types of training in these facilities; particularly live fire training, which is some of the most challenging to teach, especially with new recruits.

The Fire Commissions goal to have a Live Fire Training Facility within an hour's travel time for 90% of Maine firefighters is not only a noble goal, it is a necessary one. It reduces costs for municipalities while ensuring efficient access to certified training. Not only has certified training proven to be one of the most important retention strategies for trained firefighters, it further works to reduce firefighter death, injuries, and workers compensation insurance claims.

*(Report on Firefighter Training to the 1998 Legislature Minnesota)*

<https://www.mbfte.org/Forms/WebsiteMenu/1998-022.pdf>

As you are aware, firefighters want to serve and protect, and we are the last to ask for help. I urge your support and successful funding of LD679. I can guarantee the Fire Commission, along with the fire services of Maine, will continue to ensure our fire training facility program success.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Vicki Schmidt", written on a light-colored rectangular background.

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