

***Testimony of Mark Dubois, Portland PD Chief in support of
LD 639, “An Act to Improve Training Opportunities for
Law Enforcement Officers,”
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety
March 10, 2025***

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety, my name is Mark Dubois, and I am the Police Chief at Portland PD. I am here today to speak in support of LD 639 on behalf of the City of Portland.

I have been a police officer for over 34 years. I spent 32 years in Massachusetts with 11 years as a Police Chief. I have a Bachelors of Science in Criminal Justice and a Juris Doctorate from New England Law, Boston. During my career I spent 12 years as an instructor at several of the 13 regional police academies in Massachusetts.

Portland is here to support this change because we need to have options available to us to ensure there is no delay in training our candidates. We 3 of 4 of our new officers were put on a wait list last August. It delayed those new recruits from serving the City of Portland for a significant amount of time. They are currently in training but won't be working alone as officers until this coming August when they complete field training. The limited ability to train new recruits is due to the academy's capacity to house recruits. There is a limited amount of rooms available for each class. Eliminating the residential requirement would allow smaller class sizes in potentially regional locations to ultimately provide training to more individuals each year.

Having only 1 location for the entire State does create some difficulties for recruits. One example is having to be at the Academy early Monday mornings. Our officers leave their residence at 3:45 am to ensure they are not late for morning formation. Our officers are much closer to the academy than many others and driving 4-5 hours early Monday morning and then again Friday evening creates an unnecessary burden on recruits. Having regional non-residential academies would address that.

The residential requirement also limits individuals choosing a career in law enforcement. We have lost applicants when they learn the requirements of an 18 week residential training program. Our current vacancies are very high and we are not in a position to turn qualified applicants away, but that happens when we expect them to live at the police academy Monday through Friday. Also, the residential academy is a rare requirement Nationally. It was difficult to find other states that mandate it.

There are a variety of training models that would work well for the State of Maine in producing the best trained police officers possible. Having taught in several local police academies for many years I know that the quality of instruction and training can easily be achieved in a non-residential setting. I would argue that it's actually a better and more effective approach. The recruit officers we are getting now are older, have more work experience, including having families and we need to modify what we are doing to attract and train these individuals.

I respectfully ask you to support LD 639. Thank you for your time today.