



## **Maine Chiefs of Police Association**

P.O. Box 264 – Oakland, Maine 04963-0264

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**Chief Jason Moen - President**

Chief Michael D. Tracy (Ret.), Executive Director, Tel: (207) 838-6583

email: [mcopa@maine.rr.com](mailto:mcopa@maine.rr.com)

Web site: [www.mainechiefs.com](http://www.mainechiefs.com)

### **Statement in support of**

### **L.D. 592, An Act to Amend the Laws Governing the Crime of Endangering the Welfare of a Child**

### **Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety**

**March 17, 2025**

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, and honorable members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety 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 592.

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.

In Maine's criminal statutes, the current Class D crime of endangering the welfare of a child is established when a person violates a duty of care or protection to a child and thereby recklessly endangers the child. This legislation amends the provision to describe the crime by attaching the culpable mental state of recklessness to the violation of the duty. The bill also proposes to change the law governing the crime by enacting more serious penalty provisions if a person's reckless violation of the duty of care or protection results in serious bodily injury (Class C) or death (Class B).

Keeping community members safe is core to law enforcement officers' mission. This is especially true for our youngest and most vulnerable populations.

Unfortunately, we are seeing more cases throughout our state where a caregiver's actions and disregard for providing a safe environment have led to a child's death or significant bodily harm. Toddlers ingesting lethal drugs that have been left out in the open or drug paraphernalia easily accessible have become all too commonplace. Parents who choose to wait hours to seek medical help when their child is in distress is not a rare instance. These are calls that we deal with on a regular basis. Sadly, in many cases, the caregiver does not seem concerned about the condition of their child.

When a person's reckless indifference for a child's welfare leads to serious harm or death of that child, our laws should recognize the serious impact on the child by allowing for stiffer penalties to be imposed . Additionally, by clarifying the state of mind required for the crime and explicitly tying it to violations of the duty of care, law enforcement will have a clearer understanding of how to address and enforce cases involving child endangerment.

For these reasons, the Maine Chiefs of Police Association supports the passage of LD 592. We respectfully ask members of the Committee to vote Ought to Pass.