



# Maine Sheriffs' Association

*"One Team, One Mission"*

**Sheriff Scott Nichols, President**

Sheriff Troy Morton, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice-President, Sheriff Scott Kane, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-President – Sheriff Barry Curtis, Secretary – Sheriff Todd Brackett, Treasurer – Sheriff Dale P. Lancaster, Immediate Past President – Sheriff Kevin Joyce, Past President-at-Large - Mary-Anne LaMarre, Executive Director

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March 17, 2025

**TESTIMONY OF  
SHERIFF DALE P. LANCASTER  
MAINE SHERIFFS ASSOCIATION**

**LD 527 – An Act To Establish Bail Officers To Administer The Maine Bail Code**

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety. My name is Dale P. Lancaster. I am the sheriff of Somerset County and the Immediate Past President of the Maine Sheriffs Association. I am providing this testimony on their behalf.

Maine's sheriffs have taken the position SUPPORT for LD 527 – An Act To Establish Bail Officers To Administer The Maine Bail Code.

The Maine Sheriffs Association has been using the figure of 85% multiple times in front of this committee, as our jails are predominantly filled with pretrial inmates. We see LD 527 as having the potential to alleviate some of these numbers.

Bail commissioners in some areas have refused to respond to calls from law enforcement if a defendant does not have a fee. As a result, law enforcement and jails are waiting hours to find a bail commissioner to come and do the work, which is resulting in defendants being held on a PR or unsecured bail for multiple hours when they otherwise should be released.

The individuals who come into our facilities represent a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. Unfortunately, bail commissioners working without set bail amounts or a bail code schedule can result in inequities for those who are unable to make bail, and stay in our jails longer than others.

We recognize that the court system in Maine is struggling with understaffing and low pay. It's inevitable that paperwork errors occur, and the ramifications potentially hold an inmate longer than intended. Additionally public safety is jeopardized when a person is bailed when they should not have been released. The bill in front of you includes adding two or three new employees that would be completely focused on setting bail for new arrests. Having this bail officer available at all hours is a critical improvement, especially for counties with large rural areas such as Somerset.

Maine Sheriffs urge you to vote ought to pass on LD 527. Thank you for your consideration.