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Good afternoon,

I am Eastport Chief of Police Marc Podschlne.

All of Maine and especially rural Maine has an epidemic of vacant police officer positions due to a lack of qualified officers. This lack of qualified officers has forced many local police departments to close their doors examples include Washburn, Limestone, Van Buren, and Mexico.

The closing of these police departments strains county Sheriff's Departments and Maine State Police with long response times to both emergency and non-emergency calls and in some cases the complaint/call is queued until the following shift or day. This queue of calls increases the workload on officers in understaffed departments, creating additional stress on the responding officer.

This bill is designed to alleviate the drought of officers by tapping into a source of well-trained retired federal or out-of-state law enforcement agents or officers living in Maine.

I am also hoping this bill will help alleviate the tedious waiver process for hiring full-time seasoned law enforcement professionals from other law enforcement agencies or departments. It's been tough enough finding qualified personnel without having to drag them through a lengthy process or dealing with a denial on a waiver because there isn't a current Maine Criminal Justice Academy "bridge program."

While the intent of this bill is to alleviate the lack of qualified police officers in the state of Maine, it does not intend to eliminate the need of recruitment of qualified people throughout Maine to attend the full Maine Criminal Justice Academy. This bill only serves as a supplemental means to address the epidemic of closing police departments due to the lack of qualified personnel. Too often neighboring police departments are stealing officers from one another.

Thank you so much for considering this bill. I'm struggling to get my police department up and running due to the lack of qualified officers. Our police department was shut down from January of 2024, until I was hired as Chief on May 6, 2024, and it's been an ongoing struggle to have any police coverage at all. I have a vested interest in this bill because I believe it will help my department immensely. I am also a retired Border Patrol agent, so I have in-depth knowledge of the qualifications they bring to the table and Maine has many retired agents that bring a breadth of knowledge and experience from throughout the United States.