



Local Government Center 60 Community Drive Augusta, Maine 04330-9486

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, and Distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety,

My name is William Gillespie, and I serve as the Fire Chief for the Town of Liberty, Maine. Additionally, I am writing to you today in my capacity as President and Legislative Liaison for the Maine Fire Chiefs Association, an organization representing over 400 Fire Chiefs across the state.

This letter conveys the strong support of the Maine Fire Chiefs Association for LD 786, An Act to Promote Public Safety and Retain Essential First Responders by Funding the Maine Length of Service Award Program.

We extend our sincere gratitude to Senator Curry for sponsoring this crucial legislation, which seeks to support the dedicated Fire and EMS personnel who provide invaluable services to our communities throughout Maine.

Since its inception in 2017, the Maine Length of Service Award Program (LOSAP) Board of Directors has worked diligently to establish a sustainable program. Beginning in 2018, the Board consistently presented legislative requests for the necessary support to bring this vital initiative to fruition. The \$500,000 funding allocated during the 131st Legislative Session was instrumental in enabling the Board to contract with a third-party administrator to manage the program effectively. Currently, the LOSAP program has successfully enrolled 600 members, with over \$90,000 in municipal contributions secured. Due to the statutory requirements and operational framework established for this program, we are currently in the third year of a five-year contractual agreement, necessitating continued financial support to meet our obligations. The non-lapsing nature of previous funding has been critical in allowing us to strategically plan and now request further investment to ensure the program's long-term viability. As the Maine Length of Service Award Program is in its initial stages of implementation, we respectfully urge your continued support in our efforts to retain and reward the dedicated first responders who have committed years of outstanding service to our state. Therefore, I respectfully request your favorable consideration of and support for LD 786.