MAINE ASSOCIATION OF CRIMINAL DEFENSE LAWYERS

P.O. Box 17642
Portland, ME 04112-8642
(207) 523-9869
mainemacdl@gmail.com

2024-2025 OFFICERS

President
Jeremy Pratt

President-Elect
Matthew D. Morgan

Vice President
Sarah E. Branch

Secretary
Luke Rioux

Treasurer
Justin Andrus

2024-2025 DIRECTORS

Jesse James Archer
Randall Bates
Dylan R. Boyd
Daniel Dubé
Andrew Edwards
Benjamin T. Everett
Kristine C. Hanly
James Mason
Joseph Mekonis
Jennifer Rohde
Robert J. Ruffner
John Steed
Caitlyn Smith
Lisa Whittier

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Tina Heather Nadeau

May 11, 2025

Senator Anne Beebe-Center, Chair
Representative Travis Hasenfus, Chair
Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety
100 State House Station, Room 436
Augusta, ME 04330

Re: LD 1784 – An Act to Require Police Departments to Publish and Make Accessible Their Policies and Procedures and Require Training of Officers

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

MACDL supports LD 1784.

This legislation is a much-needed and pragmatic step toward ensuring transparency, consistency, and accountability in law enforcement practices across the state.

At its core, LD 1784 is a transparency bill. It requires that police departments in Maine publish their official policies and procedures online in a timely and accessible format. While this may seem like a modest administrative change, the impact on the fairness and functionality of the justice system is significant.

Criminal defense lawyers, prosecutors, judges, and the public all rely on the presumption that law enforcement officers are guided by consistent, department-approved protocols. Yet too often, those protocols are inaccessible even to practitioners within the legal system. This opacity can obstruct discovery, delay proceedings, and erode public confidence in the institutions sworn to serve them.

LD 1784 ensures that these critical documents are made available to the public and updated in a timely fashion. This change will help lawyers evaluate claims of misconduct, ensure agencies are meeting constitutional standards, and allow communities to better understand the values and priorities of their local law enforcement agencies.

Equally important, LD 1784 recognizes that policies are only as effective as the training that supports them. This bill mandates that departments not only adopt written policies but also ensure that officers are trained to understand and apply them. This promotes a more professional and prepared police force, which is better equipped to make sound decisions in high-stakes situations.

In a state like Maine, where law enforcement departments vary widely in size, funding, and resources, LD 1784 helps level the playing field. It sets a uniform expectation that all departments, regardless of size or location, make their internal policies transparent and train their officers accordingly. This consistency benefits everyone. For defense attorneys, it means that a client in Caribou should be afforded the same level of procedural clarity as one in Portland. For law enforcement, it means less ambiguity and fewer liability risks. For the public, it means a more reliable and equitable system of justice.

LD 1784 promotes transparency, accountability, and equal justice under the law. It strengthens law enforcement by reinforcing public trust and ensuring that officers are supported by clear, accessible policies and the training to uphold them. LD 1784 will improve the quality of policing in Maine while making the justice system more transparent, consistent, and fair for all involved.

For these reasons MACDL urges the Committee to vote "Ought to Pass."

Sincerely,

/s/ Eric S. Thistle
Eric S. Thistle, Esq.
MACDL Member