



Maine Chiefs of Police Association

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

Chief Jason Moen - President

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

email: mcopa@maine.rr.com

Web site: www.mainechiefs.com

Statement in support of

L.D. 1216, An Act to Improve Behavioral Health Crisis Services and Suicide Prevention Services

Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

May 15, 2025

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and honorable members of the Health and Human Services Committee. My name is Jason Moen. I am the Chief of the Auburn Police Department, and 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 1216.

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.

Members of the Maine Chiefs of Police Association are proud of our officers, deputies, and troopers for their incredible work in our communities to establish rapport, de-escalate when necessary, and assist individuals in mental health crises in connecting to services. However, we are also aware that our law enforcement officers are not trained mental health professionals, and we believe that ideally, as many mental health calls as possible should be diverted from initial contact with a dispatcher to appropriate responders.

This work has begun in 11 Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs), and by codifying Maine's 988 crisis response system through the passage of LD 1216, you have an opportunity to ensure the continuation and improvement of these efforts.

Like many other professions, law enforcement struggles to recruit and retain adequate numbers of employees. This leaves the individuals doing our work understaffed, overworked, and approaching burnout. Helping to divert a substantial number of mental health calls when there is no immediate threat of harm will undoubtedly ease the burden on our first responders and will result in their increased availability for other public safety concerns.

We understand that more than half of the United States has legislatively codified the use of 988 as a best practice for immediately connecting our community members with the mental health services they need, while avoiding, when possible, a law enforcement response. We hope that the 132nd Legislature will do the same and respectfully request that you vote LD 1216 as Ought to Pass.