



Maine Chiefs of Police Association

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Statement in support of

L.D. 1980, An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Stakeholder Group to Examine and Improve the Recruitment, Retention and Wellness of Law Enforcement Officers

Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

January 12, 2026

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, and honorable members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee. My name is Scott Stewart. I am the Chief of the Brunswick Police Department, and the president of the Maine Chiefs of Police Association. I am providing testimony on behalf of the Association in support of LD 1980.

The Maine Chiefs of Police Association's mission is straightforward: to strengthen the working relationships among Maine's police leaders, to promote professionalism and consistent standards across the state, and to support the men and women who serve our communities every day. At the heart of that mission is a shared commitment to protecting life and property and upholding the values of our profession.

For those of us who lead law enforcement agencies, the well-being of our officers is always at the front of our minds. We prepare them for difficult situations, we try to shield them from unnecessary harm, and we do everything we can to make sure they go home safely at the end of each shift. But policing is demanding work. It takes a toll, and that toll has made it harder to keep experienced officers and to bring new people into the profession.

The stakeholder group that the Legislature created took these challenges seriously, and we appreciate the thoughtful work that went into its recommendations. LD 1980 is the follow-through that puts those ideas into practice in ways that will genuinely help officers and the communities they serve.

We are especially encouraged to see the creation of a Law Enforcement Retention Advisory Council, and we appreciate that the Maine Chiefs will have a voice in that work. Chiefs see the

day-to-day realities of recruitment and retention, and we are ready to contribute to long-term solutions.

We also support the bill's efforts to strengthen officer wellness. Recognizing first responders on death certificates, improving wellness and critical-incident debriefing training at the Maine Criminal Justice Academy, and funding a statewide Wellness Coordinator are all meaningful steps. These policies will directly affect the health, resilience, and longevity of the people who show up for Maine's communities every day.

LD 1980 is a practical, thoughtful bill that helps address the challenges facing law enforcement across the state. On behalf of the Maine Chiefs of Police Association, I respectfully urge you to support it.

Thank you for your time and consideration.