



# Maine Sheriffs' Association

*"One Team, One Mission"*

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March 6, 2023

## **L.D. 428 – An Act to Reclassify Certain Offenses Under the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Laws and Increase The Efficiency Of The Criminal Justice System**

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice, my name is Joel Merry. I am the Sheriff of Sagadahoc County and here on behalf of the Maine Sheriffs' Association.

Maine sheriffs discussed this bill and those present voted unanimously to support L.D. 428 – An Act To Reclassify Certain Offenses Under the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Laws And Increase The Efficiency Of The Criminal Justice System.

Creating efficiencies in the criminal justice system is an objective that Maine sheriffs strive to support. Reclassifying minor offenses that will not result in jail sentences will alleviate some of the burden of our overloaded judicial system in Maine by creating a more efficient use of court hearings. It's important to note that this bill still holds offenders accountable for their infractions, but it removes the classification as criminals which can have serious, long-term consequences.

The bipartisan sponsorship of this bill is an excellent illustration of Maine lawmakers collaborating to help address the chronic, overwhelming caseloads that are clogging up our courts state-wide. Over the long term, this can reduce the incarceration of some individuals who could be held pending an arraignment date for a minor criminal offense. While those numbers are few, it would help our jails nonetheless. We commend this approach and those who worked together to bring this bill forward.

Maine sheriffs appreciate the opportunity to share our observations and position with this committee. I welcome any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Sheriff Joel Merry  
Past President-At-Large  
Maine Sheriffs' Association