



Maine Sheriffs' Association

"One Team, One Mission"

Sheriff Dale P. Lancaster, President

Sheriff Scott Nichols, 1st Vice-President, Sheriff William King, 2nd Vice-President – Sheriff Barry Curtis, Secretary –
Sheriff Todd Brackett, Treasurer – Sheriff Troy Morton, Immediate Past President –
Sheriff Joel Merry, Past President-at-Large - Mary-Anne LaMarre, Executive Director

March 6, 2023

L.D. 429 – An Act to Reclassify Certain Offenses Under the Motor Vehicle 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. 429 – An Act To Reclassify Certain Offenses Under the Motor Vehicle 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 redirecting these infractions out of our district courts and to Violations Bureau and traffic court. 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 will also 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