



**STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY
MAINE STATE POLICE**

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**TESTIMONY OF MATTHEW RUEL
DIRECTOR, STATE BUREAU OF IDENTIFICATION**

In Support of LD 747

**An Act to Require the Probate Court to Report Name Changes to the
State Bureau of Identification**

Members of the Committee:

My name is Matthew Ruel, and I am the Director of the State Bureau of Identification within the Department of Public Safety. I provide this testimony on behalf of the Administration in support of LD 747.

SBI serves as the repository of all criminal history information in the state, and currently provides criminal history for law enforcement and public purposes. We are responsible for providing this information to law enforcement across the country, from the officer roadside all the way through the criminal justice process up to judges making sentencing decisions. This information is also used as part of hiring, certification, and licensing requirements on a state and national level. Having an accurate, complete, timely criminal history is our mission and a key component in public safety.

This LD is simply an effort to get all name change information so that we can properly link records together and close a gap that could allow people to no longer be linked to their criminal history. Just since 2021 we are aware of 153 name changes where the original name had criminal history. When reviewing those records, we know they contained felony crimes, sex offenses, DV, and violating protection from abuse orders. We are also aware of at least one case where a person applied to work with special needs clients under the new name. As we continue to explore the scope of this work, I believe we may need to expand the language proposed to include notification from all agencies facilitating the name change process (i.e., Probate, the Administrative office of the Courts, and BMV).

If required for certain name changes there are already laws and procedures in place around sealing a record from public view and making it "confidential", meaning it would only be visible to law enforcement and a select number of licensing/certification requests that are tied to positions of trust in the community (DOE, Adoption, Foster Care, other state, and federally approved reasons). If the committee believes "sealing" from public view is important for some name changes the court order could identify the need to make the record confidential and we could apply those changes to our dissemination procedures.

For these reasons and many others, the Administration is in support of this LD. I apologize for not being there in person but had a prior commitment at a national meeting. I would be happy to pull together some of the major stakeholders and workshop this LD to make sure we address concerns. I will also try to attend work sessions and work with the committee as needed to answer any further questions.