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**Testimony of Senator Eric Brakey
In Support of L.D. 673, An Act to Direct the Maine Criminal Academy to Develop a
Nonresidential Law Enforcement Program
Before the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety
March 13, 2023**

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety: I am Senator Eric Brakey, representing the people of Auburn, New Gloucester, Poland, and Durham. Thank you for your presence today. I am here today as a lead co-sponsor on L.D. 673 “An Act to Direct the Maine Criminal Academy to Develop a Nonresidential Law Enforcement Program”.

The ongoing workforce shortage is hitting all areas of our public and private sector economies — and our police forces are not exempt from this.

Across the state, municipalities are in bidding wars against each other for the limited number of available police officers. These shortages can have obvious impacts on public safety, and that is why I have heard from both the Police Chief and City Manager of Auburn about the need for this legislation to alleviate the bottleneck in new officer training.

Currently, the only path to certification is training through the Maine Criminal Justice Academy. Not only do limited slots create waitlists for trainees, but also the requirement for extended, residential placement away from family discourages many potential recruits from even applying — especially older recruits who may be looking to switch into policing as a second career.

Access to a non-residential day program training option with comparable standards to the path (which could be implemented at institutions like our community colleges) would go a long way to alleviating the bottleneck for new officer training.

Thank you for your time and consideration.