



# York County Sheriff's Office

## *Sheriff William L. King Jr.*

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**Jeremy D. Forbes**  
*Chief Deputy*

**Nathan C. Thayer**  
*Jail Administrator*

**Paul G. Mitchell**  
*Major*

**David B. Lambert**  
*Captain*

**Carl L. Ronco**  
*Captain*

To: Committee Members  
From: Chief Deputy Jeremy D. Forbes  
Date: March 9, 2023  
RE: LD 673

I thought it was important to speak on behalf of LD 673, An Act to Direct the Maine Criminal Justice Academy to Develop a Nonresidential Law Enforcement Training Program.

I have been a Law Enforcement Officer for almost 28 years. I have witnessed many changes over the years when it comes to law enforcement training. I truly believe Maine Police Officers are some of the best trained in our nation. However, we are presently at a crossroads when it comes to staffing levels.

Many of our larger departments, such as the Portland Police Department, are in crisis mode due to staffing shortages. We as a state, owe it to our communities to think "outside the box" and develop strategies to not only attract individuals to our agencies, but to do it in a timely fashion.

LD 673 would not solve this problem completely, but it would be a step in the right direction. During the past few years, it has been increasingly difficult to get recruits into the Criminal Justice Academy in Vassalboro due to the backlog created by Covid. I have been with the York County Sheriff's Office for almost 3 years and have yet to send a recruit to the academy. Having only one academy in the entire state to train new recruits is a serious challenge for our recruitment efforts.

Another serious consequence of the backlog at the MCJA is having police reserves patrolling our communities with very limited training. We have all witnessed on the news the devastating consequences of poorly trained police officers making bad decisions. Throughout Covid, the MCJA has provided exemptions for police reserves to work longer periods of time without having to complete the fulltime academy.

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This act would allow training facilities to relieve the current backlog in Vassalboro, which would in turn allow police departments to get officers on the streets more quickly. The stress of a Police Chief having a reserve with limited training making life altering decisions can be averted.

Many police agencies across the nation have moved to non-residential academies for the reasons I stated above, among others. These same agencies have not experienced issues with the training of their officers. It is clear that living at the academy does not make you a better police officer.

I have been involved with a committee that has already identified areas that could hold an academy. In York County, we will be breaking ground in the spring on a state-of-the art first responder training facility. This facility would be able to provide a non-residential academy for agencies throughout central and southern Maine. This would free up room at the MCJA for recruits coming from northern Maine. It would be a win for the entire state and it's police departments.

The field of law enforcement needs to adapt and change to meet the needs of our communities and stake holders. Having one academy serving the entire population of Maine is not ideal and LD 673 would start the process of improving the staffing levels of our police departments throughout the state. Please consider supporting this important bill which will protect the citizens of Maine.

Respectfully,

Chief Deputy Jeremy Forbes