

Good morning Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury and distinguished members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee.

My name is Jack Peck, and I am the Assistant Director of the Maine Criminal Justice Academy (MCJA) and I am here today to oppose L.D. 673 an Act to Direct the MCJA to Develop a Nonresidential Law Enforcement Training Program (NLTP).

This bill seeks to attract more people into the law enforcement profession by developing a NLTP. The Basic Law Enforcement Training Program (BLETP) has evolved over many years, has seen numerous revisions, and specifically developed to bring all of Maine's Law Enforcement Officers under one unified training program. This Committee created the construct and developed the enabling statutes that provided the guidance to establish the current successful program. The BLETP was developed with the intent to train Maine's Law Enforcement Officers to the highest standards, unify and build interagency competence, and further develop the relationships between the officers and agencies that serve Maine's citizens.

Maine Law Enforcement Agencies are suffering from considerable staffing shortages which adds immense pressure to their current staff. The MCJA estimates that there are roughly 300-350 full time police officer vacancies across the state. The NLTP has been presented to the Board of Trustees of the Maine Criminal Justice Academy as a request to study the option by the Maine Chiefs of Police Association late 2022. After an extensive review, the Board found several structural, operational, and logistic obstacles that did not warrant further consideration. The findings of the study was presented to the Maine Chiefs Association and the members ended the request. The Board did agree to bring the option back for consideration if new data presented a reason to reconsider.

I do not believe that a NLTP is the answer to the overall recruitment and retention issues faced by most police agencies in the State of Maine. However the Board and DPS are committed to working with our partners to find resources to increase recruitment and retention activities.

I wish to thank this committee for your time and support, and I would try to answer any questions you may have.