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THE MAINE SENATE
131st Legislature

**Testimony of Senator Stacey Guerin
Presenting LD 756, An Act to Provide Funding for Positions
in the Penobscot County Sheriff's Office
Before the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee
March 13, 2023**

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury, and distinguished member of the Joint Standing Committee on the Criminal Justice and Public Safety. My name is Senator Stacey Guerin, I represent all of Piscataquis County and 11 communities in Penobscot County.

I'm here before you today to present LD 756, "An Act to Provide Funding for Positions in the Penobscot County Sheriff's Office." For many years, the Penobscot County Sheriff's Office has shared responsibility for rural patrol with the Maine State Police, an agreement that ended last year without a plan for coverage of these rural areas.

For those of you that might say "Why should Penobscot County get state money for a county problem?" please understand the unique geographic area of the county as well as the number of towns that the Sheriff's office has to cover. With nearly 153,000 people in a geographically expansive county-the interstate runs from Newport to Bangor to Lincoln...all the way through to Patten. If you are driving on the interstate, that's Mile 157 to Mile 264-over 100 miles.

I'm not trying to give a rural Maine geography lesson today, I just want to demonstrate that we've got a lot of folks, spread out into a huge area, and we are looking for a one-time funding solution to help us solve this problem.

You might ask, what is the downside of fewer deputies available for rural patrol duties? The answer is: Time. Regardless of the situation, if someone is making an emergency call, time is the enemy. Dangerous situations escalate, conflicts turn violent, and ultimately, people suffer.

I don't view this as a Republican or Democratic issue-my colleague from Bangor, Representative Perry, has a similar bill in to address this problem. When someone dials 911 in Dixmont, Legrange, or Corinth, we need to be confident that there is someone on duty who is in a position to respond to that call in a timely manner. I believe in my heart that this money will save lives in rural Maine towns. Thank you for the time, I'd be happy to take any questions.