

Testimony in Support of LD 588
***An Act to Promote Public Safety and Retain Essential First Responders by
Funding the Maine Length of Service Award Program.***

Good morning, Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury and members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee. My name is Rick Petrie, and I am a Paramedic who has worked in the Maine EMS system for 42 years. I am now the Chief Operations Officer for North East Mobile Health, a for-profit Ambulance Service based in Scarborough Maine and the Program Director for the Jackman Paramedic project.

I am speaking today to urge your support for the Length of Service Award program. For forty years, the State of Maine has relied on volunteers to respond to emergencies in the rural areas of the state. These areas aren't populated or busy enough to justify full-time public safety staff, but when an emergency occurs, time is of the essence. We need local people who can respond initially to provide immediate intervention where appropriate, potentially saving lives and property.

However, over the years, it has become increasingly difficult to be a volunteer firefighter/EMS provider. The operational standards have increased significantly, safety concerns are on the rise, and staffing has decreased. We need to look for ways to encourage and reward those who dedicate their time, energy, and personnel finances to volunteer as a public safety provider.

Without people who are willing to volunteer their time, response times to emergencies will increase, costs will skyrocket, and citizens lives will be negatively affected.

Thank you for your consideration, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

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