



Franklin County, Maine

Thank you, for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the Franklin County Commissioners to the Joint Standing State and Local Government Committee regarding Franklin County Commissioners **opposition** to LD 548 “An Act to Amend the duties of County Sheriffs”. The Franklin County Commissioners are concerned about the vagueness of the language to expand the duties of Sheriff, and the consequences of such an action. Such as, **Section 1.B: Responsible for administering and directing the sheriff’s department as authorized by the county budget for the county in which the Sheriff serves.** This can be interpreted as the Sheriff has sole discretion over the Sheriff’s department, hiring, firing, setting policy, and setting budgets without any Board of Commissioner’s oversight. The most concerning issue would be budget oversight removal from the Commissioners preview. This would leave the Sheriff budgets unchecked prior to the budget committee process. Currently the Board of Commissioners hire, fire, set policy, and approve the budget for the Sheriff’s Department along with other departments of the county. The Commissioner’s also have concerns with **Section 1. C: The department head of the Sheriff’s department, which consists of law enforcement, corrections, civil and court security with duties as follows:** Franklin County has never provided court security, and we do not want to. Also, under subsection 1, the language states the Sheriff is responsible for rural patrol, that was once a share duty with the State Police, and the Commissioners are not comfortable with giving that up in a statute without compensation for taking over this duty. Our interpretation of **Section 1.D: Responsible for informing the county commissioners of sheriff’s department activities on a regular basis**”, further states this is a power grab by the Sheriff.

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This formally states the Sheriff must only inform the Commissioners of its actions; however, they do not report to Commissioners, which further indicates to us there is lack of oversight. We are concerned that should LD 548 be approved, Sheriffs in all the counties would take over these functions without any oversight or accountability other than the voters. We are aware the Maine Sheriff's Association (MSA) has other views of the role of Sheriffs in County Government and LD 548 expansion of the duties aligns with our understanding of MSA's vision of Sheriff in county government. Government works best when there are checks and balances of power, and LD 548 is a threat to that. On Behalf of the Franklin County Commissioners, we ask the State and Local Government Committee reject LD 548, because the expansion of these powers to the Sheriff is a threat to the checks and balances of good governance.

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