



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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**Testimony of Representative David Boyer
Presenting L.D. 838, An Act to Identify the State's Unidentified Human
Remains
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services**

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Representative David Boyer and I proud to present L.D. 838 An Act to Identify the State's Unidentified Human Remains. I am grateful for the bipartisan lawmakers that have signed onto to the bill.

DNA and reverse genealogy technology can now be used in way to allow law enforcement and medical examiners to identify remains or DNA evidence. It has helped create new leads for law enforcement to catch suspects and has brought closure to families who have lost a sibling or a child.

It has been used in Maine with great success. In 2022, The Maine State Police used advanced DNA testing and forensic genetic genealogy to identify an unknown serial predator. Investigative leads were sent back to MSP detectives, and they were able to confirm that 56-year-old Jason Follette as the suspect in a 1996 sexual assault case and further suspected of assaulting multiple other women since. This is the first sexual assault case solved in Maine using this kind of technology.

In 2014, a landlord discovered a tenant passed away in his apartment in Oakland. For 4 years, authorities struggled to identify him and locate his family. In 2018, Maine's Office of Chief Medical Examiner contacted the non-profit DNA Doe Project to help with the identification. In just 5 weeks, volunteers at DDP were able to identify the deceased.

District 87 Mechanic Falls and Poland (part)

Currently, there are over 20 unidentified human remains that the state of Maine is in possession of. According to the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System there are 140 open cases of missing persons in Maine.

My bill would require Maine's Chief Medical Examiner to use this type of testing on the unidentified human remains that the state is in possession of. It would also make this a formal policy for new remains, if there has not been in a positive ID within 45 days.

DNA tests cost between \$3,000-\$5,000 a kit but there are discounts for bulk services. The Chief Medical Examiner's office estimates it would cost about \$100,000 to test the backlog of remains and then roughly \$10,000 -\$15,000 a year going forward, depending on how many remains the state becomes in possession of.

After talking with the Chief Medical Examiner, it's clear that they cannot absorb these costs, and this would have to be added to their budget. In my humble opinion, this is a small cost to the state and would mean a lot to the families affected.

Consider the cost to store these remains. Consider the costs of law enforcement going out on a weekend looking for a missing person, renting ground penetrating radar and thermal drones. The CME's office thinks there is a strong chance that there is crossover between Maine's missing and the unidentified remains. Perhaps the state will save tax dollars by not looking for someone that simply has not been identified yet.

I hope you also consider the closure this could bring to families in Maine who have been looking for their loved ones for years. Families like the Moreau's, who have been looking for Kim Moreau since 1986. To this day, her father Richard continues to search for his daughter, putting up missing posters on light poles in Jay.

I hope you consider making it a policy of the state to do everything possible to identify the deceased. I appreciate your time and consideration on this important matter. Thank you.