



# HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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*Testimony of Rep. Lori K. Gramlich presenting*

**LD 1247, Resolve, to Study Training Racial Issues, Racial Justice and Social Issues at the Maine Criminal Justice Academy and Study Additional Requirements for Law Enforcement Officers and Candidates**

*Before the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety*

Good afternoon, Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury and distinguished colleagues of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety, I am Lori Gramlich, Representative for House District 131, which is the lovely seaside community of Old Orchard Beach. I am pleased to present **LD 1247, Resolve, to Study Training Racial Issues, Racial Justice and Social Issues at the Maine Criminal Justice Academy and Study Additional Requirements for Law Enforcement Officers and Candidates.**

By way of background, I wanted to provide some context for my submission of this legislation for your consideration. Last session during the 130<sup>th</sup> Legislature, I presented a similar bill to address training for law enforcement, which was heard before this committee. After a good deal of work with vested parties, including members of the Maine Criminal Justice Academy, the University of Maine Augusta Director of Maine Community Policing and the Maine Municipal Association, the bill was amended to a Resolve to Study Training Racial Issues, Racial Justice and Social Issues at the Maine Criminal Justice Academy and Study Additional Requirements for Law Enforcement Officers and Candidates, which was voted out of this committee and passed through the House and the Senate. It ultimately ended up on the Special Study Table and, unfortunately, did not make it off that table prior to our adjournment.

I wanted to share with you all why I initially presented this bill last session and why I am re-introducing it to you here today.

As many of you know, I am a social worker, practicing in affecting systemic change in the public policy arena for nearly 40 years. What many may not know is that I come from a family of law enforcement. My grandfather, whom I adored, was Lieutenant for the Rochester Police Department in New York State. His son, my uncle, followed in his footsteps. I, too, thought that

a career in law enforcement would be my professional path but, as mentioned, ended up in social work.

I recall my uncle preparing to become a police officer. At the time in New York State, he was required to attain his associate degree in criminal justice and did so attending our Monroe Community College in Rochester, New York. These were the 1970s, and indeed, times were quite different. I am convinced, however, that we will forever have more to learn in our desired professions.

I, for example, as a Licensed Master Social Worker, had to obtain both an undergraduate bachelor's degree as well as a master's degree, and in order to maintain my license, I must have 24 contact hours of education every two years, with four hours of ethics being mandatory. Additionally, all licensed social workers must complete 12 contact hours of domestic violence training.


My brother, who is a master plumber, was required to have a minimum of at least one year with 2,000 hours of work in the field of plumbing installations as a licensed journeyman plumber or a minimum of at least four years with 8,000 hours of work in the field of plumbing installations as a licensed trainee plumber under the supervision of a licensed master plumber.

Other professionals have varying levels of training and requirements for their specified occupations. For example, cosmetologists and barbers must have 2,500 hours of training to become licensed, and massage therapists must have 500 hours of core curriculum plus 120 hours of contact curriculum, as well as completion of a 750-hour training course.

I reference these requirements in other professions to offer perspective.

As you likely know, Basic Law Enforcement Training Program (BLETP) is an 18-week, 720-hour program with a goal to educate cadets in the basic tenets of being a modern law enforcement officer. According to the department's webpage, cadets will learn the importance of chain of command, lifetime fitness and being physically fit, report writing, understanding the principles of community policing, effective communications, and the ability to problem-solve and "think on their feet," all with strong ethical oversight standards. Additionally, every law enforcement officer in the state must meet ongoing training requirements in order to maintain certification, which is a good start. We can do more.

Various states, including Illinois, Nevada, New Jersey and North Dakota, require a bachelor's degree or an associate degree with law enforcement experience, according to a survey by two groups.



Kentucky, Minnesota, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin require an associate degree with some alternatives for other training, and Idaho requires two years of college attendance. Some other states also require at least some college credits.

And in California, for example, organizations encompassing both police chiefs and rank-and-file officers are proposing legislation in the wake of recent civil unrest that they say would raise standards for police recruiting and training while increasing diversity.

LD 1247 is not intended to place any of the above-mentioned requirements on the academy or on law enforcement cadets or officers. Rather, LD 1247 requires that we work to ensure that the law enforcement personnel of today have the most effective tools in their toolbox to be equipped and responsive to the complex and diverse situations that they now find themselves encountering, by ensuring that our best and brightest stakeholders can come together to help make informed decisions to ensure that our law enforcement officers of today have all the best, relevant and up to date training and skills to tackle the very complex issues they are confronted with daily.

The world is indeed vastly different from the days when my beloved grandfather and uncle so proudly served. I urge you to unanimously vote to pass LD 1247. Thank you for your consideration. I would be happy to try to answer any questions for you.