

**Testimony of Vanessa Corson for Maine Emergency Management Agency, Department of
Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management**

BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY

**LD 1742 "An Act to Enhance the Use of Critical Incident Stress Management Teams and to Require
Peer Team Support"**

Position – Against

May 2, 2023

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety, good afternoon.

My name is Vanessa Corson. I am the Public Information Officer for the Maine Emergency Management Agency, and I am here to provide testimony in opposition to LD #1742 "An Act to Enhance the Use of Critical Incident Stress Management Teams and to Require Peer Team Support".

MEMA is a strong supporter of the mental health and well-being of first responders. However, the basis of our opposition is that MEMA is not the appropriate Agency to manage this program effectively.

This bill falls under Title 25 of Maine Revised Statutes; MEMA's mission falls under Title 37-B. There, MEMA is charged with representing the Governor in all matters pertaining to the comprehensive emergency management program and the disaster and emergency response of the State. Broadly, this can be summarized to say that MEMA exists to prepare and coordinate the State's efforts to support local responders before, during, and after disasters. MEMA is a small Agency, and this support is most often indirect – for example MEMA assigning a local resource need to the State Agency, or other partner, with the appropriate resource to meet the need.

While MEMA supports first responders directly with emergency response training and equipment, such as for hazardous materials response, MEMA has neither the subject matter expertise nor the funding to build a critical incident stress management program. If this bill intends for MEMA to designate an existing, full-time employee to oversee this new program – that could only come at the cost of another program, or programs at the Agency. MEMA staff is stretched thin and already wearing several hats, which was the basis for our FY24/25 biennial budget request for new headcount positions to accommodate the numerous programs and activities already tasked to the Agency. We cannot accommodate the work required of this bill without additional personnel and all other funding.

With these things in mind, we encourage you not to pass LD #1742. This concludes my testimony and I'm standing by for any questions you may have. Thank you.