



STATE OF MAINE  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
SPEAKER'S OFFICE  
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002  
(207) 287-1300

RACHEL TALBOT ROSS  
SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE

*Testimony of Speaker Rachel Talbot Ross supporting*  
**LD 2192, RESOLVE, to Ensure That the Independent  
Commission to Investigate the Facts of the Tragedy in Lewiston  
Has Necessary Authority to Discharge Its Fact-finding Mission**  
*Before the Joint Standing Committee on the Judiciary*

Good morning Senator Carney, Representative Moonen and esteemed members of the Committee on the Judiciary. I am Representative Rachel Talbot Ross of Portland. I represent House District 118 which is the Portland peninsula and I have the distinct honor of serving as the Speaker of the House. I stand before you today to introduce LD 2192, a *Resolve to Ensure That the Independent Commission to Investigate the Facts of the Tragedy in Lewiston Has Necessary Authority to Discharge Its Fact-finding Mission*.

On October 25, 2023, our beloved state was forever changed. A deadly and tragic mass shooting took the lives of 18 Mainers, seriously wounded 13 others and left *all* Mainers reeling in shock, grief and terror.

In the minutes, hours and days that followed, the work from law enforcement, first responders and medical professionals was nothing short of extraordinary. Then, in the days and weeks that followed, Maine people - our community groups, our foundations, elected officials, our schools, our businesses - banded together to provide resources, trauma support, counseling, donations and more.

From the blue hearts hanging in windows across the state to the President of the United States, we are all #LewistonStrong.

But the work of recovery does not end. Not for the people of Androscoggin and certainly not for elected officials here in Augusta.

Just after the tragedy in Lewiston, Governor Mills announced her intent to formally establish an independent commission of experts to determine the facts surrounding the

shootings, including the months preceding the events and the police response to it. And on November 9, the Governor and Attorney General announced<sup>1</sup> the establishment of a commission of seven experts with extensive legal, investigative, and mental health backgrounds.

In a letter<sup>2</sup> to the members of that Independent Commission, Governor Mills and AG Frey asked them to determine the full and complete scope of their work and to request any resources and any additional investigative powers that they might need to complete that work.

In response, the Independent Commission requested<sup>3</sup> they have subpoena power to obtain documents and perhaps to compel witness testimony as it conducts its work.

That would take statutory authority. And so we find ourselves here today. In a truly bipartisan effort.

This emergency legislation was sponsored by all four Republican and Democratic leaders of the Legislature - myself, Senate President Troy Jackson, Senate Republican Leader Trey Stewart and House Republican Leader Billy Bob Faulkingham. As written, the bill would enable the Independent Commission to issue subpoenas to compel the production of documents and or the testimony of witnesses upon a majority vote of the Commission.

If an individual or an entity does not comply, the Independent Commission could ask the Maine Superior Court to compel compliance with a subpoena. Witnesses will have the right to have legal counsel present and all other fundamental rights.

The Commission has started their work. And now, it is up to us to allow them to complete it to the best of their abilities.

While we all recognize that there is nothing we can do to erase this tragedy, we must completely understand the actions that predicated this event to both honor the lives lost and prevent this type of devastation from happening again. The work of the Commission

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.maine.gov/governor/mills/news/governor-mills-attorney-general-frey-announce-independent-commission-investigate-facts-tragedy>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.maine.gov/governor/mills/sites/maine.gov.governor.mills/files/2023-11/11.8.23\\_%20Lewiston%20Commission%20Letter.pdf](https://www.maine.gov/governor/mills/sites/maine.gov.governor.mills/files/2023-11/11.8.23_%20Lewiston%20Commission%20Letter.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.maine.gov/governor/mills/news/governor-mills-attorney-general-frey-support-independent-commissions-pursuit-subpoena-power>

must be transparent, comprehensive and thorough. This bipartisan, emergency legislation is vital to that effort.

I'm certain there will be many experts after me who can answer technical questions, but I'm happy to take any questions you may have. Thank you for your attention to this matter and your swift action in scheduling this hearing.