



**MAINE MUNICIPAL
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Testimony of the Maine Municipal Association

Neither for Nor Against

LD 2109, An Act to Maintain State Police Rural Patrol Services at 2020 Staffing Levels

January 29, 2024

Sen. Beebe-Center, Rep. Salisbury and distinguished members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee, my name is Rebecca Graham, and I providing testimony, neither for nor against of LD 2109, behalf of the Maine Municipal Association, which represents the interests of municipal government before the Legislature. The positions of the Association are established by our 70-member Legislative Policy Committee (LPC), who are elected by the councils and selectboards of municipalities in each of Maine's 35 Senate districts.

Every police agency in this state is reliant on the services provided by the Maine State Police that is reliant upon the political will of this body to appropriately resource. As the investigation of criminal activity has become more complex, and mental health resources lacking state-wide, and more acutely in rural areas, investment and appropriate staffing of shared resources are even more crucial.

The growth in significant public safety incidents where coordinated, highly specialized and properly equipped responses are necessary has highlighted this interdependency. They also serve as touchstones for municipal officials to ask critically where the burden of the risk for such technical response belongs; on the community experiencing the incident, or with the state that can invest in maintaining critical high-risk response skills and has a dedicated legal office to mitigate risk.

That said, officials are not certain that the 2020 levels are the most appropriate filter for staffing levels and instead ask the committee to consider a filter that adequately addresses the real need for staffing both in patrol ranks but also the vital policing skills that municipalities depend on from background checks, high-risk response, and evidence collection to coordinated response for large public gatherings and fatal accident reconstruction.

It may assist the committee to know that at the municipal level, while a numeric representation of positions is important to calculate, public safety need is the driver for staffing levels in many municipalities. Where changes in crime and social disorder require enhanced responses and longer time on scene for successful outcomes, those patrol resources naturally become unavailable for other types of response. Once routine processes are now significantly more time consuming and require multiple warrants, reports, and notifications to other justice entities.

For this reason alone, officials ask the committee to consider what is the appropriate staffing level to achieve the best outcomes for all of the agencies and communities that depend on those resources to be available when needed instead of selecting a date in time to define an employment level.