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**Testimony of Major Lucas Hare
131st Second Regular Session**

**NEITHER FOR NOR AGAINST LD 2109 - AN ACT TO MAINTAIN STATE POLICE RURAL
PATROL SERVICES AT 2020 STAFFING LEVELS**

Senator BeeBe-Center, Representative Salisbury and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety, my name is Major Lucas Hare, and I am here today to testify on behalf of the Maine State Police and the Department of Public Safety Neither For Nor Against LD 2109 An Act To Maintain State Police Rural Patrol Services at 2020 Staffing Levels.

In preparation for this bill the State Police spoke with the bill's sponsor, Senator Timberlake to try and understand exactly what the goal is. We learned that Senator Timberlake has concerns with the lack of state police patrol in rural communities throughout the state and in particular his district to include the town of Turner.

While we agree that rural patrol resources are scarce in some rural communities, we are unable to provide a higher level of patrol services with our current staffing. We have been in front of this Committee several times in the past couple decades asking for additional funding so that we could hire more rural patrol troopers. Although we have had your generous support on many occasions, your approvals have failed to be funded by the appropriations Committee. We have fewer patrol troopers today than we did in the 1970's, while the State Polices' responsibilities have increased greatly.

The State Police has provided and continues to provide rural patrol coverage in many communities throughout the state, but we also provide Rural Policing services to every community in Maine to include things like Homicide Investigations, Tactical Team Responses, Crisis Negotiations, Under Water Recovery Services, Crime Lab Forensics, Crowd Management Team services just to name a few. Without additional staffing our ability to provide these services to every agency statewide will be compromised.

Over the years we have attempted to find solutions to our growing capacity issues. We have asked for more funding to hire additional troopers, we have pulled all of troopers from task

forces, we have stream lined processes and leveraged technology solutions to make the resources that we do have more efficient, we have hired civilian staff to take on some of the duties that we identified did not require sworn officers to do, and finally we have renegotiated several call sharing agreements to better align with our ability to provide excellent police services. The State Police is committed to providing rural patrol as well as Rural Policing, but we need an increase in staffing levels just to keep up with what we are currently tasked with. In order to continue providing rural patrol services and meet our current resource coordination agreements we will need even more patrol Troopers.

The State Police understand and support the concept of this bill, but since we need additional officers in order to effectively provide more rural patrol throughout the state, we must take a neutral stance on this bill.

On behalf of the Department of Public Safety and the Maine State Police, I thank you for your time and would be happy to try and answer any questions that you might have.