



# Maine Sheriffs' Association

*"One Team, One Mission"*

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February 3, 2025

**TESTIMONY OF  
SHERIFF PATRICK POLKY  
MAINE SHERIFFS ASSOCIATION**

**In opposition to**

**LD 179 An Act to Amend the Maine Bail code to Eliminate the Class E  
Crime of Violation of Condition of Release**

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee of Criminal Justice and Public Safety, I am Sheriff Patrick Polky. I am here today on behalf of the Maine Sheriffs' Association. I am the sheriff of Knox County and a retired armed services veteran. I have had the privilege of serving and protecting Maine citizens from several different public safety professions and agencies for over thirty years, twenty-five of those as a full-time law enforcement officer.

Maine sheriffs convened last month to discuss L.D. 179 – An Act to Amend the Maine Bail Code to Eliminate the Class E Crime of Violation of Condition of Release. Maine sheriffs unanimously voted to oppose this bill.

Your Maine sheriffs may have many responsibilities, but the overarching goal is quite simple: we protect and serve the citizens entrusted to us. If implemented, LD 179 would remove an essential tool we use specifically to protect Maine citizens, and I would like to provide you with some examples that highlight our concerns.

Let's imagine that someone is arrested for assaulting their domestic partner. If LD 179 were to pass, the alleged offender very likely would feel emboldened to contact, follow, harass the victim, and be physically present at the victim's residence, employer, or educational facility without any fear of reprisal. What kind of message might the passage of this bill send to survivors of domestic violence?

Another scenario that is likely to occur involves harassment and threats between neighbors. Harassment may seem like a minor offense to some, but imagine living near someone who has harassed and threatened you for years; it puts people on edge, having to worry about what today is going to be like with their neighbor. The arrest of offenders alleged to have committed these behaviors is done to cease future behavior. The passage of this bill would not stop law enforcement

from being able to charge a suspect. Still, it may make the offender feel like they can continue to torment and harass the victim, even after being released from jail, and it would be a step backward from any attempt to stop future offenses.

I have seen first-hand occasions when offenders involved in harassment-type cases become emboldened when using different substances, such as alcohol and drugs. The passage of this bill would take away our ability to restrict substance use for an offender who has demonstrated that substances are causing them to act more provocatively or irrationally. Taking away the ability to enforce substance use conditions, victims are likely to feel vulnerable and unsafe and will likely lose faith in the criminal justice system.

We are also at a time when the criminal justice system is placing numerous sets of individual bail conditions on alleged offenders; the most I have seen is 12. In my opinion, the Maine bail code already gives alleged offenders the chance this bill is proposing by releasing them out of incarceration on pre-conviction bail numerous times.

Unfortunately, a percentage of alleged offenders disregard their bail conditions. Maine law enforcement needs to continue to have the tools to hold people accountable by taking dangerous and habitual offenders off the streets before they can cause more harm and trauma to their victims.

The same individuals who elect Maine's lawmakers are the constituents who also elect Maine sheriffs. It's incumbent upon all of us to make decisions that are in the best interests of all Maine citizens.

Maine sheriffs urge members of this committee to unanimously OPPOSE the passage of L.D. 179. I am happy to answer any questions you may have. Thank you for your time.

Respectfully submitted,

Sheriff Patrick W. Polky