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Testimony in Support of:

*L.D. 108, "An Act to Authorize the Release of Military Records to the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner for the Purposes of Suicide Reporting and Prevention"*  
Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs

Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs. I'm David Richmond, Director of the Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services and I'm here today to testify in support L.D. 108, "An Act to Authorize the Release of Military Records to the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner for the Purposes of Suicide Reporting and Prevention".

In 2023, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs awarded over \$4.3 million in cooperative agreements to states and territories to support and provide technical assistance to suicide mortality review committees. These committees are designed to identify and analyze local suicide deaths, particularly among veterans, to inform and enhance suicide prevention strategies.

Maine was selected as one of 10 states to participate in this groundbreaking effort to understand veteran suicide, identify populations or locations of special concern, and develop data-informed prevention strategies. Without access to these records, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner may be missing relevant background information that is held by the Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services that may be necessary to identify trends and develop effective prevention measures.

LD 108 would authorize the release of a deceased individual's military records to the Maine Chief Medical Examiner, in the performance of their official duties and at their request, for the purposes of providing relevant background in the interest of suicide reporting and prevention.

Maine's veteran suicide rate is a grave concern that we are intent on addressing to the best of our ability. LD 108 can help put all relevant available information in the hands of the Medical Examiner's office, while protecting the veteran's privacy standards, and better position them to identify trends in veteran suicide that could lead to actions to reduce it.

Thank you for your consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Respectfully Submitted,

David Richmond  
Director, Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services