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## **Testimony of the Maine Municipal Association**

**In Support For**

*LD 96 – An Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles and Traffic Law Governing Mandatory Driver's License Suspension for Refusing Testing for Drugs or a Combination of Drugs and Alcohol*

**February 10, 2025**

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Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenus and distinguished members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee, my name is Rebecca Graham, and I am testifying in support for LD 96, at the direction of MMA's Legislative Policy Committee (LPC). Our LPC is made up of individuals from across Maine with municipal officials elected by their peers across Maine's 35 Senate districts representing communities with very different access to available enforcement resources and local capacity.

Officials expressed they generally support changes to the law to improve the ability for a law enforcement officer in any part of the state to adequately address the significant problem of driver's operating under the influence of any alternating substance that impairs proper vehicle operation. While efforts to balance judicial backlog and enforcement priorities have hindered practice to strictly enforce impaired driving violations, accidents caused by impaired drivers have skyrocketed. Impaired drivers pose significant threats to the lives and property of Maine residents and the growth in these incidents is evident from statistics publicly available from the Department of Public Safety.

Since January 1, 2025, until today, 41 days, there have been 106 crashes involving impaired drivers. Fifty-seven of those crashes have involved personal injury. This means every day since you have been in these committee chairs, someone has been injured by an impaired driver. Simultaneously, agencies across the state are struggling to recruit and train qualified officers and Drug Recognition Experts (DRE) are an additional level of training that is important, but not ubiquitously available. Many agencies need to send individuals out of state for this certification and they are not available in all parts of the state while impaired operation occurs everywhere and does not necessarily require a DRE to be present to determine.

As drafted, this will allow for flexibility to detect impaired driving first by observation of a law enforcement officer and then allow the officer to require alternate submission to impairment tests in absence of a specialized drug impaired operation expert. All of these cases begin and end with a regular trained certified law enforcement officer observing an operation that is inconsistent with a driver having proper control or operation of a motor vehicle and initiating a traffic stop, regardless of the availability of a second arriving individual to determine the type of drug an individual may be operating with in their system.

For all these reasons, officials thank you for considering these growing risks in our communities and ask that you support LD 96 and the efforts to reduce impaired drivers for the safety of all individuals on Maine's roads.