



**MAINE MUNICIPAL
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Testimony of the Maine Municipal Association

In Support For

LD 477 – An Act to Enhance Public Safety in Rural Counties by Providing State Police Patrol and Policing Services

And in Qualified Opposition to

LD 461 - An Act to Fund Rural Patrol Services in Washington County

February 24, 2025

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus and distinguished members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee, my name is Rebecca Graham, and I am testifying in support for LD 477, and in qualified opposition to LD 461, 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.

Municipal officials are expressing serious concerns over the shifting tax burden for law enforcement services in rural areas—services that have traditionally been supported through partnerships between well-resourced state and local agencies, including county governments. To meet the growing demands of modern policing, especially in remote regions, increased staffing is crucial. Effective response to high-stakes incidents often requires sustained efforts lasting 12 hours or more, pulling resources from multiple jurisdictions. Additionally, specialized, highly trained responses are becoming essential—requiring both cutting-edge technical resources and deep knowledge of local communities.

The need for a coordinated, bipartisan approach to rural policing is urgent. Every town and city in the state relies on these shared resources, and when they become unavailable, public safety in those areas is put at significant risk.

Municipal officials are therefore strongly in favor of LD 477, which would provide the statewide, broad-based staffing increase necessary to meet the policing needs of rural areas in all counties. This approach alleviates the financial burden on struggling property taxpayers in smaller counties. At the same time, they acknowledge the unique challenges faced by Washington County, which is why the delegation has proposed LD 461. However, the concern with LD 461 is that it creates a narrow carve-out for one county, failing to address the broader, statewide needs. Such an approach could set a dangerous precedent, undermining the responsibility of the legislature to support law enforcement needs across the entire state.

It's also important to note that as this legislature convenes, many small-town police departments are on the brink of collapse. Even well-resourced agencies in other parts of the state are increasingly relying on mutual aid from neighboring forces to address escalating public safety threats. No agency can meet these demands with local resources alone.

Officials are urging legislators to invest in the staffing needs of the Maine State Police with a holistic perspective, ensuring that law enforcement services are strengthened statewide and no county is left behind.