

Jeffrey Harmon - Auburn
Martin Grohman - Biddeford
Carl Sheline - Lewiston
Mark Dion - Portland
Penelope York - Rockland
Cara Pelletier - Bangor



MAINE MAYORS COALITION

Strengthening Our Cities & Our State

Jodi MacPhail - Sacc
Becky Brink - Sanfor
Richard Matthews - South Portlan
Michael Morris - Waterville
David Morse - Westbrook

Supported By: Mitchell Tardy Jackson Government Affairs - 104 Sewall Street, Augusta, Maine 04330 - 207-622-1365

**Maine Mayors Coalition Testimony on
639, An Act to Improve Training Opportunities for Law Enforcement Officers, and
723, An Act Requiring the Maine Criminal Justice Academy to Develop a Nonresidential Basic
Law Enforcement Training Program**

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety, my name is Jeffrey Harmon, I'm the mayor of Auburn, and I'm here today representing the Maine Mayors Coalition in support of LD 639, An Act to Improve Training Opportunities for Law Enforcement Officers, and LD 723, An Act Requiring the Maine Criminal Justice Academy to Develop a Nonresidential Basic Law Enforcement Training Program.

The Maine Mayors Coalition is a nonpartisan group representing the mayors of eleven Maine communities – Auburn, Bangor, Biddeford, Lewiston, Portland, Rockland, Saco, Sanford, South Portland, Waterville and Westbrook – and nearly 300,000 residents. The Coalition advocates on behalf of our citizens and municipalities for policies that recognize the vital services Maine cities provide and the positive impact Maine cities have on our state. The Coalition seeks to work in partnership with state and federal elected officials to meet the needs of Maine people.

As you're aware, all law enforcement officers in the State of Maine must complete 18 weeks of residential training at the Maine Criminal Justice Academy before being placed on full duty. A waiver may be granted if a person has completed qualifying training elsewhere, including at a nonresidential academy. Annually, the Academy offers two 18-week sessions graduating about 140 law enforcement officers. At that rate, the Academy does not have the capacity to meet the state's and our cities' need for full duty police officers.

Our cities are struggling to fill vacancies in our police departments. It is especially frustrating to find people who want to serve, but who must wait many months to begin training. Requiring the training to be a residential program also hampers our recruitment efforts. Some people who would make excellent police officers are not able to meet their family commitments by being at a residential academy for 18 weeks.

LD 639 and LD 723 offer solutions to this plaguing issue that is being felt not just in our cities, but in police departments and sheriffs' offices of all sizes across the state, by allowing for more flexibility in training locations and nonresidential training options.

Both these bills would require the same curriculum, training standards, and use of certified instructors as the Academy's Board of Trustees now requires for the residential program. The main difference would be the physical location. Nonresidential programs could be offered in the locations, and at the times, that better meet the excess demand for law enforcement officer training. We understand that the costs for these programs would be covered by the participating municipalities and counties so that the Academy would not incur increased expenses.

The Maine Mayors Coalition asks for your help in addressing this serious public safety issue. Please support a nonresidential law enforcement training program.

Thank you for your time.