



Janet T. Mills  
Governor

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STATE OF MAINE  
*Department of Public Safety*  
**MAINE CRIMINAL JUSTICE ACADEMY**  
15 Oak Grove Road  
Vassalboro, Maine 04989



Michael J. Sauschuck  
Commissioner

Jack D. Peck, Jr.  
Director

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, and distinguished members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee.

My name is Jack Peck, and I am the Director of the Maine Criminal Justice Academy (MCJA) and I am here today to oppose L.D. 639, an Act to Improve Training Opportunities for Law Enforcement Officers.

The Department of Public Safety and MCJA staff are committed to providing the best training to our Maine law enforcement officers. This bill seeks to attract more people into the law enforcement profession by developing a nonresidential law enforcement training program (NLTP). Our current Basic Law Enforcement Training Program (BLETP) has evolved over many years, has seen numerous revisions, and was specifically developed to bring all of Maine's Law Enforcement Officers all (LEOs) under one unified training program.

This unified training was implemented in 2001 and has proven to be successful in training every officer, from every agency in the State of Maine under "one roof". This Committee created the construct and developed the enabling statutes that provided the guidance to establish the current successful program. The BLETP was developed with the intent to train Maine's LEOs to the highest standards, unify and build interagency competence and cooperation, and further develop the relationships between the officers and agencies that serve Maine's citizens.

Maine law enforcement agencies are experiencing staffing shortages which adds pressure to their current staff. The MCJA estimates that there are roughly 250 to 300 full time police officer vacancies across the state. The NLTP has been presented to the Board of Trustees of the Maine Criminal Justice Academy as a request to study the option by the Maine Chiefs of Police Association (MCOPA) in late 2022. After an extensive review, the Board found several structural, operational, and logistic obstacles that did not warrant further consideration. The findings of the study were presented to the MCOPA and the members ended the request. The Board did agree to bring the option back for consideration if new data presented a reason to reconsider.

However, the current data does not warrant starting a (NLTP). Since my tenure started in 2023, only eleven potential Cadets were unable to enroll into a BLETP. In fact, two of the four classes had no one on the wait list and another class had just one.

The current instructor model of the MCJA relies solely on subject matter experts from across the state, who volunteer to teach at the academy. The MCJA has no full-time instructors. Any potential future NLTP's would have to run concurrently with a BLETP. This would in fact create a shortage of instructors who would be available to teach at both a NLTP and a BLETP. It would also further strain agencies that are already experiencing staffing shortages or budget constraints.



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This strain could negatively affect our volunteer training model and cause an overall failure for both programs.

Additionally, in November 2024, the Maine Criminal Justice Academy was awarded the 2024 Safer Outcomes grant through the COPS office (\$500,000 in funding) to integrate de-escalation and crisis response training in the BLETP. This project will include conducting an updated job task analysis (JTA), which has not been done since 1989, and a needs assessment for full-time Maine law enforcement officers which will inform a new curriculum appropriate for policing in 2025 and beyond. During this JTA process, Academy staff expect to gather additional information about current industry needs and what appropriate BLETP curriculum and model is indicated in the future. If a nonresidential model is appropriate, the Board of Trustees and Academy staff will appropriately consider this option.

I do not believe that a NLTP is the answer to the overall recruitment issues faced by police agencies in the State of Maine. This bill appears to be a solution looking for a problem. However, the MCJA Board of Trustees, the Department of Public Safety and MCJA staff are committed to working with our partners to find resources to assist with recruitment, retention and providing the very best training the state has to offer.

I wish to thank this committee for your time and support, and I will try to answer any questions you may have.

*Jack Peck, Jr.*