



Ed Crockett

128 Bramblewood Drive

Portland, ME 04103

Residence: (207) 797-8371

Ed.Crockett@legislature.maine.gov

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

2 STATE HOUSE STATION

AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002

(207) 287-1400

TTY: MAINE RELAY 711

March 10, 2025

*Testimony of Representative Edward Crockett introducing
LD 639, “An Act to Improve Training Opportunities for
Law Enforcement Officers,”
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety*

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, and distinguished colleagues of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety, my name is Representative Edward Crockett, and I represent House District 112, which includes West Falmouth and the North Deering section of Portland. I am here today to present LD 639, **An Act to Improve Training Opportunities for Law Enforcement Officers**, which would make an important change to support law enforcement, especially recruitment of new officers, in Maine.

This proposal modifies Title 25 by removing the residency training requirement for law enforcement cadets. As the law stands today, all new cadets must complete the Maine Criminal Justice Academy 18-week on-campus Basic Law Enforcement Training Program (BLETP) which takes place in Vassalboro twice per year.

The challenge that this legislation is attempting to address is that recruitment and hiring for law enforcement positions is a year-round effort, particularly where I live, but not only where I live. Departments must work to fill needed and important public safety positions, and the reality is that the required pace of recruitment and the schedule and capacity of training are not always aligned. This has created roadblocks to fully staffed departments, particularly in Portland, and unnecessary financial pressure when departments hire then have to wait months for training spots to open up.

The 2023 Maine Criminal Justice Academy Annual Report illustrates the challenge. According to that report, there were 2,910 authorized full time police officers across Maine. Among the 147 Departments there were 320 vacancies.¹ However, the program trained and graduated 123 law enforcement professionals.² Training to fill the 320 vacancies would take 5 classes to process

¹ Me. Dep’t of Pub. Safety Me. Crim. Just. Acad., *2023 Annual Report to The Joint Standing Comm. on Crim. Just. & Pub. Safety*, Apr. 2024, at 20, https://www.maine.gov/dps/sites/maine.gov/dps/files/inline-files/MCJA%202023%20Annual%20Report%20For%20BOT.FINAL_.pdf

² *Id.* at 6

without accounting for the natural attrition that would happen in the interim. Looking further out, training 140 cadets per year in the BLETP would only replace the state's current full time police workforce in over 21 years. That rate of training is detrimental to public safety.

The impact of this legislation would be to remove the residency requirement, and only the residency requirement. This would allow for local training according to the structured curriculum and standards as an extension of the Maine Criminal Justice Academy but on a flexible schedule that better suits the needs of recruitment and hiring. The vision is to continually evaluate and run future classes only on an as-needed basis collaborating with the Director and Board of Trustees. Simply put, the idea is to allow a municipality to run a non-residential off-site academy according to the standards and curriculum of the academy and with academy staff to train cadets in waiting and clear any backlogs.

This proposal is a big idea to effectively address a big challenge. I offer it with the upmost respect for the Maine Criminal Justice Academy, Director Peck, Assistance Director Rider and the Board of Trustees. Qualified, eager new law enforcement recruits should be trained and on duty as quickly as possible.

I urge you to support LD 639, because right now it is critical to the strength and morale of existing law enforcement, and in the future it is critical to efforts to recruit and retain the best and brightest who want to dedicate their lives to law enforcement in our great state.

Thank you for your time, your attention and your commitment to support the safety of the people of Maine.