

TESTIMONY
OF
MICHAEL J SAUSCHUCK
MAINE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation

Hearing Date: March 11th, 2025 2:00 P.M.

"An Act Making Unified Allocations from the Highway Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2025, June 30, 2026 and June 30, 2027"

Good afternoon, Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation. My name is Michael Sauschuck, and I am the Commissioner of the Department of Public Safety. I am here today to testify in support of LD 274.

Overall Budget

Maine – like many states – is facing a tight budget environment. The Mills Administration has spent months carefully developing a balanced budget proposal to preserve the programs lawmakers and Maine people support, including education, revenue sharing, public safety, higher education, and school meals, while also protecting the long-term fiscal health of Maine.

Ultimately, we took a balanced approach: one that makes some investments - including operational needs such as technology efficiencies, health and safety improvements, collective bargaining impacts, etc. - that proposes some spending cuts, and that makes some targeted revenue increases. We know these proposals are difficult and appreciate that you will consider them with an open mind.

We look forward to working with you over the coming months to enact a budget that supports our greatest asset of all: the people of Maine.

Departmental Overview

The Department of Public Safety was established to serve the people by providing, coordinating, and leading a responsive and comprehensive public safety system to protect their lives, rights, and properties. This broad mission is accomplished with 693 positions spread across 10 bureaus. The Bureaus are Administration, Capitol Police, Consolidated Emergency Communications, Emergency Medical Services, Fire Marshal's Office, Gambling Control, Highway Safety, Maine Criminal Justice Academy, Maine Drug Enforcement Agency, and the Maine State Police.

Initiatives Impacting Multiple Programs

Before discussing each of our programs individually I would like to start with the three items that impact multiple programs in our department; increases to statewide technology services, reclassification/reorganizations, and the Lewiston Tragedy After Action Report. We have included a supplemental document (page 5) for reference and to assist you in navigating the budget document to find where each of these items can be located.

Statewide Technology Services

Increases to statewide technology services impact the majority of the programs in the department. With the increase in MaineIT Rates the Department of Public Safety will experience an 18% increase in costs from \$6.6 million to \$7.8 million to maintain current services. Funding is provided for these increases in Highway Safety (Page 12), Motor Vehicle Inspection (Page 14), State Police (Page 20) and Turnpike Safety (Page 25).

Reclassification/Reorganization

There is a longstanding process in place to evaluate proper classification of positions and

determine, through a functional job analysis, whether a position meets the requirements for reclassification, including pay adjustment. The State's collective bargaining unit agreements include negotiated language related to this process. Reclasses may be employee or management initiated. Approved employee-initiated actions include a retroactive pay component back to the date the request was signed. Only approved reclasses are included in our budget requests. These initiatives are to request funding for the approved action, which is required before the reclassification can be processed and paid. Funding is provided for these increases in State Police (Page 23), State Police-Support (Page 24), and Traffic Safety (Page 25).

Lewiston Tragedy

On October 25, 2023, a mentally ill and military trained suspect shot and killed 18 people and injured at least 13 more in two separate locations in Lewiston, Maine. The individual was armed with a high-powered rifle, attached scope and laser sight and was able to flee the scene. This was a planned, orchestrated, and unprecedented attack.

What followed the shooting was a massive police response that provided emergency medical aid to the injured, located the suspect, protected the public from further harm and provided extensive victim services.

Maine State Police were charged with the largest manhunt in Maine history, coordinating with over 400 law enforcement officers, 16 Tactical Teams, and numerous federal agencies. Working with New England State Police and federal partners the Maine State Police coordinated the crime scene processing at both shooting scenes and other locations to document the tragic events of that night. Maine State Police coordinated the investigation and the interviews of witnesses while notifying the families of those who were killed. State Police also coordinated press and law enforcement briefings as well as social media posts and updates for the public that reached millions.

In the days that followed the discovery of the suspect's body, the Maine State Police established a website to enable the sharing of information with the public regarding the facts of the tragedy.

Over 200 Maine State Troopers (almost 2/3 of our entire agency) responded to the scene, ensuring that no more civilians and no law enforcement officers were killed or injured, ultimately locating the suspect in under 49 hours. As expected in such an unprecedented event, there are numerous lessons learned that should be applied to future operations, if applicable.

The Independent Commission to Investigate the Facts of the Tragedy in Lewiston issued its final report on August 20th, 2024, charging the Maine State Police to conduct a full After-Action Review with an independent evaluation by an entity with policing expertise. The subsequent internal After-Action Review of the response and investigation into this horrendous incident revealed that many things were done very well by the Maine State Police, but also identified some vulnerabilities related to staffing and equipment.

From these efforts there are a number of initiatives that are necessary to ensure that the Maine State Police, the largest police agency in Maine and the only agency with the capability to coordinate any similar incident of this magnitude, is properly equipped and staffed to be prepared should another tragic day occur in our great state that we once thought was immune from such an atrocity.

These initiatives can be found on Page 18 Initiatives #2 and #3, Page 21 Initiatives #2, #3, and #4, Page 22 Initiatives #1 and #3, and Page 23 Initiative #1.

Department of Public Safety Supplemental Document to Biennial Budget Testimony

Increases to Statewide Technology

- Highway Safety (Page 12)
- Motor Vehicle Inspection (Page 14)
- State Police (Page 20)
- Turnpike Safety (Page 25)

Reclassifications and Reorganizations

- State Police (Page 23) - Provides funding for the approved range change of 9 Computer Forensic Analyst positions from range 27 to range 28.
- State Police – Support (Page 24) - Provides funding for the approved reclassification of one Office Associate II position to an Office Specialist I position retroactive to February 28, 2024.
- Traffic Safety (Page 25) - Provides funding for the approved reorganization of one State Police Specialist position to a State Police Specialist Corporal position and related All Other costs.

Lewiston Tragedy Initiatives

- Page 18 (Initiative #2)
- Page 18 (Initiative #3)
- Page 21 (Initiative #2)
- Page 21 (Initiative #3)
- Page 21 (Initiative #4)
- Page 22 (Initiative #1)
- Page 22 (Initiative #3)
- Page 23 (Initiative #1)

Administration - Public Safety

I will begin today on page 11 with the Administration- Public Safety Program. This Program is the Commissioner's Office, and it oversees the activities and programs of the bureaus and offices, undertakes comprehensive planning, develops and implements procedures and practices to promote economy and coordination within the department and actively seeks cooperation between the department and all other law enforcement entities in the State. The office houses the public information office and coordinates with the Department of Administrative and Financial Services for information technology, financial, and human resource services.

The only initiative in this program provides funding for increases to the Department's share of the cost for the Financial and Human Resources Service Center within the Department of Administrative and Financial Services. They provide centralized accounting, payroll, budgeting and human resource services to departments and agencies. Service Centers are established as an internal service funds intended to recoup their costs through billings to departments and agencies for services provided. The Service Centers expenses are higher due to negotiated and benefit changes to Personal Services as well as increases in operational costs. This recoupment process results in increased billing rates to departments and agencies.

Highway Safety DPS

The next program, Highway Safety, begins on page 12. The Bureau of Highway Safety promotes behavioral driver safety programs and projects designed to make Maine's roads and highways safe. These programs consist of motor vehicle occupant restraint, child restraint, impaired driving, motorcycle safety, speed enforcement, and the Maine defensive driving program. The bureau also is responsible for the annual planning, development, implementation and evaluation of the

Highway Safety Plan for Maine.

The first initiative reallocates the cost of one Contract Grant Manager position and one Director of Bureau of Highway Safety position from 100% federal expenditures fund to 50% federal expenditures fund and 50% highway fund. This reallocation is necessary because there was a federally mandated change in matching requirements, so it is no longer viable to fund these two critical positions 100% through federal grants.

The second initiative provides funding for increases to statewide technology services and impacts the majority of the programs in the department. With the increase in MaineIT Rates the Department of Public Safety will experience an 18% increase in costs from \$6.6 million to \$7.8 million to maintain current services.

Motor Vehicle Inspection

The next program, Motor Vehicle Inspection, is located on page 14. The Motor Vehicle Inspection program administers and enforces the motor vehicle inspection program including issuing stickers and authorizing garages to perform the inspections.

The first initiative provides funding for increases to statewide technology services and impacts the majority of the programs in the department. With the increase in MaineIT Rates the Department of Public Safety will experience an 18% increase in costs from \$6.6 million to \$7.8 million to maintain current services.

The second initiative provides funding for the purchase of two (2) vehicles for Motor Vehicle Inspection consistent with an established vehicle replacement schedule.

State Police

The Maine State Police Program begins on page 16. The Maine State Police provides full law enforcement services to areas that do not have organized police departments. Troopers respond to all

manners of calls for service much like any other police department would. Troopers also patrol the rural roads, interstate system, and Maine Turnpike enforcing motor vehicle laws and responding to accidents. Maine State Police detectives investigate all homicides outside of Portland and Bangor as well as other major crimes. The Maine State Police operates a crime lab, computer crimes lab, and a commercial vehicle unit. They maintain the state's criminal history records and sex offender registry. They also provide many other specialized teams and law enforcement services to the State of Maine.

The first of these initiatives provides one-time funding to replace two bomb suits for the six-member State Police Bomb Team. The suits currently have a 5-year life expectancy, and we are trying to get on a cycle of relacing two suits every other year.

The second initiative provides one-time funding for the purchase of one Bright Beam Blue Laser for the crime lab. This forensic laser is an alternative lighting system that allows our latent fingerprint section to operate with greater efficiency when chemically processing latent prints and also allows for superior photographic evidence collection.

The third initiative provides one-time funding for the purchase of a marine sonar device which is a critical piece of equipment when searching for bodies or vehicles. The current piece of equipment is over ten years old and is an outdated piece of equipment.

The fourth initiative provides one-time funding for the purchase of a throwable robot for the tactical team and allows for remote viewing of high-risk critical incidents while mitigating the risk to Tactical Team members.

The fifth initiative provides one-time funding to replace 25 handgun lights for the tactical team which have reached the end of their useful life.

The sixth initiative on this page provides funding for the increase in cost of fuel for State Police Vehicles. Maine State Police have an average usage of 700,000 gallons of gas per calendar year. The fuel costs are currently budgeted at 700,000 gallons at \$2.25 per gallon with a total baseline fuel allocation of \$1.58 million. Increased funding for an estimated per gallon price of \$3.25 is needed.

The seventh initiative for this program provides one-time funding for 4 specialized digital cameras which are needed for the proposed four newest Emergency Response Team supervisory members.

The next initiative provides one-time funding to replace 26 rifles for the tactical team that will reach the end of their useful life in September of 2026. The average useful life for a rifle is 7 years.

The ninth initiative provides one-time funding to replace infrared lasers for the tactical team that will reach the end of their useful life in September of 2026. The average useful life for these lasers is 7 years.

The next two initiatives provide for one-time funding to purchase 350 plate carriers and 350 helmets for all sworn officers. The Lewiston Tragedy showed some vulnerabilities regarding who was able to be assigned to certain tasks as the Tactical Team was the only group that was equipped with vests that were able to provide additional protection from a rifle round. *This initiative is associated with the Lewiston After Action Report and is necessary to implement our recommendations in a timely manner.*

The twelfth initiative provides one-time funding to replace 2 ballistic shields which will reach the end of their useful life in July of 2025. The average useful life for these shields is 5 years.

The next initiative found at the top of page 19 provides for one-time funding to replace 10 sniper rifles which will reach the end of their useful life in July of 2025. The average useful life for these rifles is 7 years.

The fourteenth initiative provides one-time funding to replace 25 tactical ballistic vests which will reach the end of their useful life in June of 2026. The average useful life for these vests is 5 years.

The fifteenth initiative provides one-time funding to replace eight 40 MM launchers which will reach the end of their useful life in June of 2026. The launchers are the agency's primary less-lethal gas deployment option and they have a 10 year life expectancy.

The sixteenth initiative provides one-time funding for the purchase of an unmanned aerial vehicle that can be linked to existing software and allows for the production of incredibly high-quality point clouds when coupled with the Faro software.

The next initiative provides one-time funding for the purchase of a Faro Scanner Upgrade. The lidar scanners provide scientifically repeatable measurements for crime scene reconstruction. A Faro Focus Premium scanner is twice as fast as older models with 150-meter range so it will scan faster and further. This means fewer and faster scans, which help expedite processing crime scenes, which may be critical depending on location. It also allows us to work with our NESPAC partners and other investigators like the FBI, Bangor and Portland, which also utilize this platform.

The eighteenth initiative provides one-time funding to replace the roof at the K-9 office, which is approximately 2000 square feet and overdue for repair.

The next initiative provides funding for increases to statewide technology services and impacts the majority of the programs in the department. With the increase in MaineIT Rates the Department of Public Safety will experience an 18% increase in costs from \$6.6 million to \$7.8 million to maintain current services.

The twentieth initiative provides funding to resurface the parking lot and driveway at the Alfred barracks.

The next initiative found at the top of page 21 provides funding for increased debt service costs associated with the purchase of State Police vehicles on a regular vehicle replacement schedule. With the increased cost of vehicles recognized over the last few years (47%) this funding will be necessary to meet our loan obligations in FY26 and FY27.

The second initiative found on page 21 establishes one Wellness Coordinator position to support the wellness and resiliency needs of all 479 members of the State Police, both sworn and civilian, by providing mental health services and conducting critical incident stress debriefs. The position would also provide supervision for the Member Support Team which currently provides peer support services for the agency and many others. *This initiative is associated with the Lewiston After Action Report and it is necessary to implement our recommendations in a timely manner.*

The next initiative establishes one Behavioral Health Coordinator Position to oversee our existing Behavioral Health Liaison program. The program has been a runaway success, diverting mental health calls to Behavioral Health Liaisons and getting citizens the appropriate care they need. This position will help supervise the existing five Coordinators, bring consistency to the program, and act as a yellow flag liaison to our Law Enforcement Officer Partners. *This initiative is associated with the Lewiston After Action Report, and it is necessary to implement our recommendations in a timely manner.*

The last initiative on page 21 establishes one Lieutenant position to serve as a full-time Emergency Preparedness Coordinator for the Incident Management Assistance Team while also coordinating major events and overall training. The current commander also serves as the commander of the Maine Turnpike Troop which is already a full-time job. *This initiative is associated with the Lewiston After Action Report, and it is necessary to implement our recommendations in a timely manner.*

The twenty-fifth initiative establishes 3 State Police Specialist positions assigned full-time to the tactical team to address not only the active threat training needs highlighted in the Lewiston After Action Report but the drastic increase in the Tactical Team deployments that pull team members from their primary role within the agency. The tactical team responded to 133 calls in 2024. That's twice the amount of call outs from just 4 years ago when the team deployed 63 times in 2020. *This initiative is associated with the Lewiston After Action Report, and it is necessary to implement our recommendations in a timely manner.*

The next initiative provides funding for increased dispatch costs, which have increased approximately 27% since the FY 20/21 Biennium and Maine State Police did not make a request to increase the baseline in FY 24/25.

The third initiative on page 22 establishes one Public Service Coordinator I position and is intended to be a full-time Public Information Officer dedicated specifically to the Maine State Police. Inquiries and communication with the public are constant 24/7 and this requires a dedicated individual to communicate internally with the Command Staff, Lieutenants, Sergeants, and Troopers. A full-time agency specific position of this kind would also allow us to spend more time and resources proactively educating the general public. Educational programing is always a two-way street and it provides prime opportunities to build trust and relationships with those we serve. *This initiative is associated with the Lewiston After Action Report, and it is necessary to implement our recommendations in a timely manner.*

The next initiative provides funding for the annual cost of the Maine Information and Analysis Center records management and information system which allows for audits and inspections. This system started as a MaineIT solution but a few years ago it was determined that it would be more affordable in the long run to contract with a vendor as the current system had become outdated.

The first initiative at the top of page 23 establishes 4 State Police Detective Corporal positions intended to serve as Evidence Response Technicians in the Crime Lab to help the Sergeant keep up with record numbers of homicide investigations and other criminal work. Currently the Maine State Police has one full time evidence Sergeant who responds to every homicide scene and is on-call around the clock. With this fulltime responsibility, he is overwhelmed with two years of record-breaking volume, special assignments relating to expert testimony, managing all aspects of the Evidence Response Team including the Department's Evidence Tracking System while also coordinating and training members in Bloodstain Pattern Analysis, Shooting Reconstruction, Unmanned Aerial Vehicles, and lidar scanners. Adding these additional full-time senior members of the Evidence Response Team will allow an on-call rotation to ensure a proper response and shared responsibility for scene processing. *This initiative is associated with the Lewiston After Action Report, and it is necessary to implement our recommendations in a timely manner.*

The final initiative provides funding for the approved range change of 9 Computer Forensic Analyst positions from range 27 to range 28.

State Police Support

The first program, State Police Support, begins on page 24. The funding in this program provides clerical support for the field troops of the State Police and consists of seven Office Associate II positions.

The only initiative in this program provides funding for the approved reclassification of one Office Associate II position to an Office Specialist 1 position retroactive to February 28, 2024.

Traffic Safety

The next program, Traffic Safety, provides accident reconstruction and training services and maintains the statewide crash reporting system, including the Airwing operations. The Maine State

Police Airwing consists of two Cessna 182 fixed wing aircraft, which are strategically stationed for regional response to mission requests. The State Police Airwing is often utilized for traffic enforcement along the interstate from Kittery to Houlton, and aerial photos of traffic crash and crime scenes, as well as for conducting searches for lost or wanted persons.

The first initiative provides funding for increases to statewide technology services and impacts the majority of the programs in the department. With the increase in MaineIT Rates the Department of Public Safety will experience an 18% increase in costs from \$6.6 million to \$7.8 million to maintain current services.

The second initiative provides funding for the purchase of one (1) hybrid vehicle for Traffic Safety consistent with an established vehicle replacement schedule.

The final initiative in this program provides funding for the approved reorganization of one State Police Specialist position to a State Police Specialist Corporal position.

Traffic Safety – Commercial Vehicle Enforcement

The next program to be discussed is the Traffic Safety – Commercial Vehicle Enforcement program which begins on page 27. This unit, referred to as CVEU, oversees and enforces the laws regarding vehicle size and weight for the protection of Maine's infrastructure. The unit verifies compliance with the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations through both roadside enforcement efforts and terminal safety reviews of Motor Carriers, to reduce commercial vehicle-related crashes statewide. Roadside enforcement includes the verification of valid commercial driver's licenses, hours-of-service for drivers, vehicle safety inspections, and the weighing of vehicles. The only initiative in this program was discussed earlier and can be seen below.

The first initiative provides funding for increases to statewide technology services and impacts the majority of the programs in the department. With the increase in MaineIT Rates the Department of

Public Safety will experience an 18% increase in costs from \$6.6 million to \$7.8 million to maintain current services.

The second initiative provides funding for the purchase of five (5) vehicles for Traffic Safety Commercial Vehicle Enforcement consistent with an established vehicle replacement schedule.

This concludes my testimony. Thank you for your time and I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.