

Testimony Against LD 1032 An Act Regarding Court Security

Presented by Kevin Anderson, Executive Director, Maine State Law Enforcement Association

Good Morning Senator Anne Carney, Representative Any Kuhn and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee.

My name is Kevin Anderson, I am the executive director of the Maine State Law Enforcement Association, also known as MSLEA. MSLEA is the labor representative for all state law enforcement except law enforcement supervisors and the Maine State Police. MSLEA represents the Maine Judicial Marshals to include Sergeants, Corporals and Deputy Judicial Marshals.

The Judicial Marshals are specifically selected by the State Court Administrator to provide law enforcement and security services for the Maine courthouses from Caribou to Kittery. They are certified law enforcement officers with special training and the power of arrest.

It is no secret that the Judicial Marshals like a lot of other law enforcement agencies in Maine are struggling to recruit and retain staff. MSLEA and the Judicial Branch are both aware that the Judicial Branch will have to improve pay and benefits to be competitive to have full staffing. One such benefit that is being heard before this legislature is the retirement for Judicial Marshals. The Judicial Marshals are currently covered under the regular plan 25/65. All other state law enforcement officers are covered under a special plan that allows for a 25/55, 25, or 20 year retirement plan.

The Judicial Marshals are currently the lowest paid LE officers in this bargaining unit. To be competitive, much like law enforcement agencies across the state, the Judicial Branch is going to have to increase pay and benefits to attract more candidates and retain the ones they have. The Judicial Branch will be negotiating a year contract this year with the MSLEA and it is my hopes that this legislation encourages this legislature to support the Judicial Branch in attracting and retaining qualified staff by supporting efforts to increase pay and benefits for the law enforcement agency that the State Court Administrator has chosen to protect those who work and attend the courthouse across Maine by approving the appropriate funding to ensure that happens.

A recent study conducted by the Stakeholders Group on Recruitment, Retention and Wellness that was presented to the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee, when law enforcement was asked what changes might improve their job satisfaction, The top four changes were 1) Pay changes and improvements 2) Benefits changes and improvements 3) Increased support from local government and 4) Changes and improvement to retirement planning.

There is no doubt that the Judicial Branch has struggled with staffing some facilities but replacing them with other law enforcement will only spread other law enforcement thinner and likely lead to higher costs. Other law enforcement and private security agencies do not have the specialized training that the Judicial Marshals have or the relationship that the Judicial Marshals

have with the rest of the Judicial Branch that they work with hand in hand on a daily basis. Instead of shifting the responsibility to other entities, I would encourage the Judiciary Committee to vote ought not to pass on this bill and instead place their support behind the Judicial Marshals when and where they are able to so that they may be more competitive in the job field and recruit more staff to provide the services that the Judicial Branch needs them to perform.

Thank you for your time and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.