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COMMISSIONER

**TESTIMONY OF**

**SAM PRAWER, DIRECTOR OF GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS  
MAINE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS**

**March 26, 2025**

**In Support of:**

**LD 102, An Act to Notify the Public of Juveniles Who Are Wanted Persons**

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety, I am Sam Praver, Director of Government Affairs at the Maine Department of Corrections (DOC) providing testimony today in support of LD 102, An Act to Notify the Public of Juveniles Who Are Wanted Persons. This is a department bill that’s meant as a starting point for a very important discussion about how we ensure the public is adequately informed in situations where public safety may be at risk. The department thanks Rep. Lajoie for agreeing to sponsor this bill on our behalf.

This proposal is a result of complications that arose last July, when two residents managed to escape from Long Creek Youth Development Center. As you will likely recall, the initial escape occurred on Friday, July 26, 2024, and both of the individuals who escaped were back in police custody by Tuesday, July 30, 2024. Within that timeframe, the department was responsible both for managing a coordinated effort to safely locate and apprehend the individuals who escaped and for informing the public about the circumstances and any potential risks to public safety. To do that, the department worked closely with local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies to locate the individuals, and also issued press releases to keep the public informed. Throughout the course of these events, the department issued a total of three press releases to update the public on the circumstances, one about the initial escape, and two additional releases when each of the individuals were back in police custody. The nature of the information we were able to include in the press releases is what I’d like to discuss with the committee today.

When a person escapes from a Department of Corrections facility, our department has, at the very least, a few baselines for notifications to the general public. We provide notice regarding when and where the escape occurred, we address what the department is doing about it, and we provide the public with any information that may reasonably implicate public safety. These are not legal obligations, they are simply good public administration.<sup>1</sup>

As the committee is likely already aware, juvenile criminal history record information, with few exceptions,<sup>2</sup> is confidential under Maine law (*see* 15 MRS §3010). While the department is able to share juvenile criminal history record information with another criminal justice agency for the purpose of the administration of juvenile justice – in this case apprehending juveniles who’ve escaped from custody – the department is not able to share any identifying information with the general public. This reality presented real information delivery and public relations complications for the

<sup>1</sup> There are, however, some relevant legal obligations, such as the requirement to notify victims under 17-A MRS §2106.

<sup>2</sup> Exception - 15 MRS § 3010(3) reads: “Notwithstanding subsection 2, if a juvenile has been adjudicated as having committed a juvenile crime that would constitute murder or a Class A, B or C crime if the juvenile adjudicated were an adult, then that adjudication and any resulting disposition imposed, but no other related juvenile history record information, may be disclosed publicly. Any adjudication and related disposition sealed pursuant to section 3308-C, subsection 10 is not subject to public disclosure pursuant to this subsection.” *See also* 15 MRS §3010(4) for additional exceptions.



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department during the events from last summer due to the fact that our team believed at least one of the residents who escaped from Long Creek posed a serious risk to public safety.

As you'll see in the attached notice from July 27, 2024, our department did something that may seem odd – we advised the public to report any sightings of the individuals who escaped and not to approach or engage them, but we did not provide any description or way to identify the individuals in question. This is because our department leadership and the Assistant Attorneys General assigned to our department all agreed that dissemination of any personal identifying information related to the escaped individuals was prohibited under 15 MRS §3010. Without any descriptive information about the individuals in question, one has to wonder how a person could report a sighting or know to not engage with a person they encounter.

That is the context within which we submitted the proposal before you today. LD 102 represents the administration's efforts to address the problem described above, while also maintaining the foundational policy of protecting the general confidentiality of juvenile criminal history record information. This bill is narrowly drafted to remove confidentiality protections only for the purpose of apprehending juveniles when either the juvenile has escaped from custody, as defined by the Maine Criminal Code, or a warrant of arrest has been issued alleging the juvenile has committed a juvenile crime that would constitute murder or a Class A, B, C or D crime if the juvenile were an adult. As drafted, this bill provides several protections to ensure that the ability to share this information is not overly broad.

1. **Line 12:** Makes clear that information may only be shared “for the purpose of apprehending the juvenile” – once a juvenile is in law enforcement custody, this provision allows zero sharing of information.
2. **Lines 12-15:** Limit the precise information that may be shared.
3. **Paragraphs A, B, and C:** Further define the specific circumstances when information may be shared and who is responsible for making a determination that those circumstances have been met.
4. **Paragraph C:** Only applies after an arrest warrant has been issued.
5. **Line 18:** Also allows the dissemination of information related to an individual who had turned 18 prior to the escape only for the purpose of apprehending the individual. This is important because, even though a person who commits the crime of escape under 17-A MRS §755 is no longer protected by the confidentiality provisions in 15 MRS §3010 due to being an adult, the location of the escape being a juvenile facility would reveal that person's juvenile criminal history.<sup>3</sup>

The department both respects and deeply believes in the underlying policy for protecting the confidentiality of juvenile criminal history record information. The State of Maine provides juveniles with an alternative to the otherwise generally applicable criminal process in recognition of the fact that juveniles are not developmentally in a place to be held accountable for their decisions in the same way as adults. The Maine Juvenile Code then goes a step further in providing robust confidentiality protections so that a juvenile's record does not follow them for the rest of their lives. The framework within LD 102 was drafted to protect that policy, while balancing the need to ensure that the public is adequately informed, especially when it comes to matters related to public safety.

That being said, the department also respects that there is likely to be a wide variety of positions regarding the scope and necessity of the information we are seeking the authority to share, and we look forward to working with the committee to address any questions or concerns that arise.

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<sup>3</sup> It's important to note that the department was actually faced with this exact circumstance related to one of the individuals who escaped in July 2024. Eventually, other law enforcement agencies put out arrest warrants for adult crimes committed by that individual and the press was able to connect those warrants to the escape from Long Creek.



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For the reasons stated above, the Department respectfully presents this testimony in support of this proposal.

This concludes my testimony.

I am happy to answer any questions.

Sam Praver  
Director of Government Affairs  
Maine Department of Corrections