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Testimony of the Maine Municipal Association

Neither for Nor Against

LD 1295 – An Act to Waive Basic Law Enforcement Training Requirements for Full-time Law Enforcement Officers Who Have Successfully Completed Equivalent Courses in Other Jurisdictions

April 7, 2025

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus and distinguished members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee, my name is Rebecca Graham, and I am testifying neither for nor against LD 1295, at the direction of MMA's Legislative Policy Committee (LPC). Our LPC is made up of individuals from across Maine with municipal officials elected by their peers across Maine's 35 Senate districts representing communities with very different access to available enforcement resources and local capacity.

The lack of curriculum investment to create bridge programs or new models of police education remain a barrier and is far from speculative, with real community examples of communities challenged by the lack of resources provided to growing responsive future models of law enforcement education. However, as drafted, LD 1295 will do little to change the fact that the Maine Criminal Justice Academy (MCJA) already does review credentials from applicants who have been certified by other entities as it simply moves the language from "may" to "shall" resulting in little operational change.

What has been a source of frustration is understanding how those evaluations occur, with transparent and clear metrics before a candidate is hired. As the committee has heard, one municipality found this out after consulting with the MCJA board assured of the waiver program and hiring the individual only to have the waiver declined because the federal academies have never been comparable and there is no bridge program to assist adding to their existing credentials. Attending an 18 week residential academy as a new cadet is not an attractive option for a mature retired federal law enforcement officer.

As the report on MCJA goals identified, updating curriculum to incorporate modern adult learning principles that require staff time and resources to broaden partnerships. The chronic underfunding of the programs and permanent staff at MCJA make this task impossible until there is a shift in the legislative body's understanding of the imbalance between the communal intergovernmental role of the academy, it's reliance on the good will of local government to support the mission and their lack of agency to drive adequate state (legislative) investment to address those needs.

Also included in the report is a finding that "Training coordinators have competing priorities that detract from curriculum development; there is opportunity to incorporate more adult-based learning principles in the classroom."¹. This bill is seeking to elevate that need and officials understand and

¹ MCJA Final Strategic Plan, Slalom, 2023, p. 36 available at:
<https://www.maine.gov/dps/sites/maine.gov/dps/files/inline-files/MCJA%20Final%20Strategic%20Plan.pdf>

support the intent however the language doesn't necessarily achieve it. For these reasons the Association is neither for nor against the bill at their direction and is happy to work with the committee and the sponsor to find a path that resources MCJA enough to address this critical need, and suggest it be made a part of the working group study previously voted out under LD 723.