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Senate of
Maine

Senate District 6

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**Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety on
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

Good afternoon, Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety, my name is Marianne Moore. I proudly represent Senate District 6, which includes all of Washington County as well as 16 Communities in Eastern Hancock County. I am here today to introduce 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*."

As you all know, law enforcement agencies statewide are facing significant challenges in recruiting new officers. While departments of all sizes are struggling, the impact is especially severe for smaller agencies, as they have fewer resources to compensate for staffing shortages and smaller pools from which to draw.

Over the last several years, a number of police departments across the state have shuttered their doors.

- Last June, Washburn voted to disband their police after they were down to one officer who covered their town and Ashland. The officer had been doing double duty for four years but could no longer deliver effective service.
- Also last year, the Mexico Board of Selectmen voted to close the town's police department, which was down to just two officers. This decision was not financially driven but rather a result of the ongoing recruitment crisis.
- Before closing their doors in 2021, Van Buren officers were working 48 hours in a row. As one former officer said, "[people] cannot function like that."

The closing of these Police Departments strains county Sheriff's Departments and Maine State Police with long response times to both emergency and non-emergency calls and in some cases the complaint/call is queued until the following shift or day. It is nonsensical to put people in such a dangerous position when there are qualified individuals who are willing and able to do this work.

In December of 2023 I was contacted by a retired border patrol agent who wanted to start working for two police departments in Washington County. These departments desperately needed more officers and were eager to get another employee to fill in shifts. First he tried to get a job with the Eastport

Police Department. Unfortunately, he found that Eastport couldn't hire him. He then applied to work as a School Resource Officer in Machias but was again found ineligible.

Despite his two and a half decades of exemplary service in law enforcement, the retired border agent did not meet Maine's law enforcement requirements. He had already graduated from a 20 week accredited police training course and had no desire to go back take such courses again. Although he wanted to serve his community – and the community wanted him to serve – he could not. There is currently a waiver process so that eligible applicants do not have to go back through the entire Maine Criminal Justice Academy but that process can be complicated and some find it too burdensome to tackle, particularly if they are only planning to work part time.

The intent of this bill is to alleviate the lack of qualified police officers in the state of Maine, not eliminate the need of recruitment of qualified people throughout Maine to attend the full Maine Criminal Justice Academy. It is only meant to be a supplemental means to address the epidemic of closing police departments due to the lack of qualified personnel.

It is undeniable that law enforcement agencies across the state are desperate for trained officers. The current situation is leaving departments dangerously undermanned and leaving our constituents at risk. Thank you for your time and consideration. I urge you to support LD 1295 and would be happy to answer any questions you might have at this time.