

April 11, 2025

LD1484      An Act Related to Public Access of Records of Certain Disciplinary Actions of Public Employees

Senator Carney, Rep. Amy Kuhn and members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Michael Edes, the executive director of the Maine Fraternal Order of Police and I am here today, representing the Maine Law Enforcement Coalition. Our coalition is made up of members from the Maine State Trooper's Association, Maine State Law Enforcement Association, Maine Association of Police and the Maine Fraternal Order of Police. Altogether, our coalition represents roughly 90% of the men and women serving in Maine law enforcement.

I am here today to support LD1484, An Act Related to Public Access of Records of Certain Disciplinary Actions of Public Employees. Every so often, a bill is proposed that does not significantly change the major content to an existing law but will have a great and positive impact on the people the law is focused on. That is the case with LD1484. This bill would only keep confidential, final imposed minor discipline that is mainly corrective, and performance-based final agency action.

Over the past several years, our officers have seen an increase in scrutiny and personal attacks by the press and by defense attorneys, who are looking for nothing else but to discredit law enforcement officers and other first responders. The press has deemed it their mission to expose any and all mistakes by police officers, including very minor policy violations and other job performance-based matters. While they call it being transparent, most of us call it a witch hunt and this is nothing but a continuation of the "defund the police" nonsense. Attorneys representing criminal defendants, find it easier to focus their efforts on trying to discredit police officers for issues totally unrelated to the cases in which they are defending, then it is to just go out and defend their clients on the facts of the case.

LD1484 would allow the lowest stages of disciplinary and corrective actions to remain confidential, while still allowing agencies and their employees to improve in their performance, grow as an organization and to move forward without the continuing public shaming that comes with having to release all minor discipline and employee performance records.

We all strive to provide a better quality of service to the public that we are sworn to serve and protect. We believe in accountability, and we believe in transparency. However, the current system of allowing every minor personnel performance record to be publicly accessed and released only serves to erode public confidence in our employees, decrease morale within our agencies and to foster an atmosphere of fear within personnel.

I strongly urge the members of this committee to support LD1484.