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Testimony of the Maine Municipal Association

In Support of

LD 1980, An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Stakeholder Group to Examine and Improve the Recruitment, Retention and Wellness of Law Enforcement Officers

January 12, 2026

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, and members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee, my name is Tanya Emery, and I am providing testimony today in support of LD 1980 at the direction of the Maine Municipal Association's (MMA) Legislative Policy Committee (LPC). MMA is a nonpartisan, nonprofit member service organization that aims to help provide policy solutions that work for all residents of Maine. The LPC is composed of 70 municipal officials from across Maine, elected by their peers to represent member communities.

LD 1980 is a critical step in supporting Maine's law enforcement officers and their families. The report of the Stakeholder Group on Law Enforcement Recruitment, Retention, and Wellness documented the tremendous difficulty that agencies face trying to recruit new officers at a rate that offsets attrition. The work of the group confirmed these challenges around recruitment, retention, and wellness are systemic, statewide problems, not isolated challenges. Law enforcement officers (LEOs) are asking for wellness programming and support, while retirees are shedding light on the long-term impact of LEO service. The stakeholder report provides clear, actionable recommendations focused on "higher order needs" such as department culture, opportunities for advancement, and a sense of support and belonging.

MMA supports LD 1980 as it provides clear, evidence-based recommendations to address recruitment, retention, and wellness challenges among the LEO community. MMA itself recognized the need for support and resources and in 2024 rolled out ServeStrong, a confidential mental health and trauma-based service for first responders and their families via a 24/7 web platform, in partnership with National League of Cities Risk Information Sharing Consortium. This free resource includes professional mental health assessments, trauma-based telehealth therapy, and other resources tailored specifically to the needs of the LEO community. The mental health and wellbeing of first responders is a top priority for our communities and therefore for MMA.

MMA urges the committee to support LD 1980 and stands ready to collaborate with state and local partners to establish a sustainable framework for implementing and funding these important recommendations. Building a reliable, affordable system that law enforcement officers and their families can trust is essential. Thank you for your time and attention to this matter, and I am happy to answer any questions you might have.

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