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Testimony of Maine Association of Police Executive Director Paul Gaspar before the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

Monday January 12th, 2026

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"

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety. My name is Paul Gaspar and I am a resident of South Portland.

I am proud and privileged to testify before you today in three capacities. One, as a founding partner of the Maine Law Enforcement Coalition. Secondly, as the Executive Director of the Maine Association of Police (MAP) and our membership of approximately 850 full time, municipal police officers and public safety dispatchers, and most importantly, as the former Chair of the Stakeholder Group tasked by this Committee to develop the recommendations before us today.

Along with my steadfast Co-Chair, Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner Laura Feaga, and the incredible participating members of the Stakeholder Group, we passionately speak 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".

It has been both a challenge and an honor to have been selected to serve as the group's chair, and to have the opportunity to work with some of the most dedicated and knowledgeable advocates from different disciplines on a single effort with the goal of ensuring that we not only work to recruit and retain the best men and women to serve, but also to have a mechanism to fight with, and alongside them when they experience the traumas and life altering exposures to horror during the entire course of their career – and beyond into retirement.

It is heartening to be here after embarking on this effort on April 11th, 2024. From that time, to today, it serves as one of the most significant tasks of my career, but also, through dedicated and loyal partnerships, brought a first of its kind look into the much-overlooked cumulative effects first responders experience, the long-term effects on recruitment and retention, but also a culture that for too long has allowed responders in quiet crisis to fear asking for assistance, and being viewed as broken as well as a discardable liability. This Committee's efforts along with the Stakeholders, has brought the very voice of Maine Law Enforcement officers throughout the state to collectively say; "We can no longer survive this career without help and support!"

We are proud to join and continue to work with this Committee to see this request through. We appreciate the leadership that has been taken by this committee, applaud the bill that has been born from it and thank you for listening as well as hearing the voice of Maine Law Enforcement in their plea for assistance.

On behalf of our all those involved in this effort, for Maine's Law enforcement Officers and their families that depend on them, I would hope for the continued support of the Committee in voting "Ought to Pass".

Thank You for your time and I will be happy to attend the work session on this bill.

Sincerely,



Paul D. Gaspar
Maine Law Enforcement Coalition/Maine Association of Police