



Patrick W. Polky
Sheriff

KNOX COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE



Curt R. Andrick
Chief Deputy

Testimony of Patrick W. Polky, Knox County Sheriff and Saint George Resident In Support of LD 2158 – Emergency Legislation to Address Vacancies on the Knox County Budget Committee

Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government

January 28, 2026

Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury, and Honorable Members of the Committee: My name is Patrick Polky, and I serve as the Sheriff of Knox County and am a resident of Saint George. I am here today to testify in strong **support** of LD 2158, Emergency Legislation to Address Vacancies on the Knox County Budget Committee.

As Sheriff, I am responsible for ensuring the public's safety in Knox County and for overseeing the management and operations of the county's corrections and law enforcement services, which Knox County residents and visitors depend on every day. These responsibilities require stable, predictable, and timely budget decisions. When the budget process is delayed or impaired, it has direct operational consequences for public safety agencies and can have unintended ripple effects in our communities.

The current vacancies on the Knox County Budget Committee have significantly hindered the committee's ability to function as intended under our charter and state law. This has created uncertainty in the budget approval process and makes it more difficult for county departments—including the Sheriff's Office—to plan responsibly for staffing, training, equipment, and essential services.

Public safety operations cannot be placed on hold. We must make decisions months and years in advance regarding personnel, contractual obligations, and compliance with state and federal requirements. An incomplete or dysfunctional budget committee results in a flat budget, putting public safety obligations at risk by reducing essential services and available resources, and potentially increasing liability risks, which can significantly impact overall taxpayer costs.

LD 2158 offers a reasonable and narrowly focused emergency solution to an immediate governance problem. It does not expand authority unnecessarily, nor does it undermine local control. Instead, it ensures the budget committee can meet, deliberate, and fulfill its statutory duties so Knox County can adopt a lawful, timely budget, as I believe Knox County residents have asked for.

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From a public safety perspective, continuity matters. Instability in any county function can have real consequences, such as impacting staffing levels, operational capabilities, emergency response, and ultimately the community's safety. This legislation helps restore that stability.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to vote Ought to Pass on LD 2158 and move it forward without delay. Thank you for your time and for your continued commitment to effective and responsible government.

I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.

Respectfully submitted,

Patrick W. Polky
Sheriff, Knox County