

February 27, 2026

Maine 132nd Legislature
Appropriations and Financial Affairs Joint Standing Committee

Re: LD137 An Act to Expand the 1998 Special Retirement Plan to Include Employees Who Work for the Office of Chief Medical Examiner

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, members of the Joint Appropriations and Judiciary committees,

I am Lindsey Chasteen. I am a mother, a daughter, a sister, a wife, and a friend. I am also the Director of Operations at the Office of Chief Medical Examiner.

I am here today in support of LD137, An Act to Include the Office of Chief Medical Examiner in Maine's Special Retirement Plan.

The employees of the OCME choose to serve their community in a way many people shy away from. Our society views death as a taboo topic, not to be discussed in polite conversation. We choose to make death care our responsibility. We carry the weight of seeing people as they died. We document their stories, we make identifications through scientific means when a visual identification is not possible, we clean them up, we listen to their loved ones, who speak through tears and disbelief, share stories of the person they've lost. We shoulder the vicarious trauma and grief associated with our work.

We do this work with professionalism, compassion, and respect. We do it because it matters.

We also do this work alongside law enforcement officers and forensic lab staff, who qualify for Maine's Special Retirement Plan. We work the same cases. We share the same responsibility. We are exposed to the same trauma.

But we are not treated the same.

OCME employees are excluded from the Special Retirement Plan, even though our work carries the same burden and serves the same purpose.

This is not about special treatment. It is about equal treatment. The Special Retirement Plan exists because Maine recognizes that some public service comes with a greater human cost. OCME employees carry that cost every day.

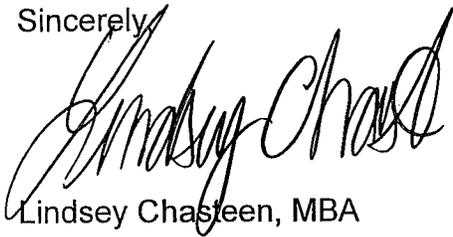
We do this work quietly. We do it because families deserve answers. We do it because justice depends on it. We do it because someone must.

What we do is not easy. Someone once told me, "Those who can, must." When a loved one dies, people say, "May their memory be a blessing." For my incredible crew, and all those who come after us I say, "May their stories and our memories of them remind us that if we can, we must."

I humbly ask this committee to fund LD137 as an opportunity to correct this inequity and recognize OCME employees as equal partners in Maine's public safety and forensic system.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lindsey Chasteen". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lindsey Chasteen, MBA
Director of Operations
Maine Office of Chief Medical Examiner