

Good morning Senator Dill, Representative O'Neil and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, thank you for your time. My name is Adam McKay, from Poland Maine. I am a state park manager and wanted to express my personal thoughts on bill LD 657. These are my thoughts and opinions, and not the departments.

LD 657 would provide needed training, safety equipment, and tools for park staff to protect the resource from the people, the people from the resource and the people from the people, all of which we are required to do. State parks see over 3 million people a year (each year that number grows), and we are required to enforce the rules and laws in title 12. Thankfully we have been allowed recently, to start carrying pepper spray to protect ourselves. The ability to carry pepper spray was only allowed after myself and other managers fought management for this simple protection.

The public sees staff as no different when we are enforcing rules and regulations, as outside law enforcement enforcing other state laws, we face similar risks at times, like where we do not know anything about the person we're interacting with. But unlike other law enforcement, we do not have the tools they have to protect ourselves and the people. The visitor could be on drugs, alcohol, or have psychological issues. Currently, we do not even have the ability/right to ask for someone's I.D., run that I.D. or run vehicle plate numbers, just to see if the person is dangerous that we are about to walk up on or talk to.

From what I can tell, park staff are not allowed to perform any law enforcement duties without our directors O.K., AND approved training through the criminal justice academy. Other staff and I have been told that the director can authorize law enforcement powers like summons. But after looking through Title 25, section 2801-B, number 1-A. and then down to the paragraph below L. and then number 2, I do not think the Director can authorize those powers until we have been certified through training that was OK'd by the criminal justice academy. Currently we do not have those certifications. So, if I am reading that correct it seems like the director can NOT authorize the power to let us write summons without that training component. Also, after reading that same section, it doesn't seem like staff can perform any law enforcement powers including, directing traffic, asking people to stop/wait, ask for ID's, enforce laws, all of which we do during the season. It seems staff cannot do any of those actions in my previous sentence, without the Directors OK, PLUS, the approved training and certificate from the criminal justice academy. Mr. Skolfield's bill would finally get us that training and certification to do our jobs lawfully and correctly.

On a rare occasion the Director has given approval to a Park Manager to write a summons, that one manager was certified 3 decades ago. That manager is the one of maybe only a couple, with an approved training certificate left in the bureau. But that is a clunky way to perform a job, if we were to be certified, every manager would have to call the director each time they need to write a summons. I think this idea of Director approval shows a lack of respect that staff are not competent to do their job, a burden on the director who would have to field those calls, and horribly inefficient. What other law enforcement officer needs to call to ask for permission to do their job? Director approval was established almost 10 years ago before any of the current Directors were in their positions.

A perfect example of the dangers of enforcing rules/laws without knowing someone's background, is when we had an individual constantly staying late and not following our rules two years ago. The individual finally gave up some information, which luckily, I have a good relationship with an officer, and he ran the man's information a couple days later. When it came back, the first thing he said was he is a "two officer call because of his background with law enforcement and threatening them with weapons."

And we were having very colorful discussions with this individual, all while portraying someone with law enforcement powers, which we don't have. In this visitors' eyes, we have a uniform, a badge and are trying to get him to comply with laws, of course he is going to think we are law enforcement. Unfortunately, it is not a matter of if something will happen to a staff member, it is a matter of when.

Our incident reports only reflect a small amount of the enforcement interactions I have on a yearly basis. Some of these are very friendly and just educational (only noted in a separate logbook). Which would be the way we still run business if this bill were to pass. Educate and inform first, use summons and evictions last. I do want to take a second to let you all know that we do not even have the authority to evict someone for more than one day. You can break a law every day and come back the very next day. Frustrating to say the least. These other interactions I am talking about do not warrant any further enforcement. The visitor complies because they probably didn't even know the rule. One thing the bill would do, is allow me to write summonses for title 12 regulations and write trespass orders that occur in the park. People often either just leave or face no repercussions because many outside officers do not want to enforce title 12 or have the time to do so. We have one sheriff on duty during daylight hours for Poland. That officer could be anywhere, and we are left without help. They are not going to drop everything to get to the park in time to enforce a rule, that in their eye, man not seem important. I think we would see more compliance if either the threat of, or the actual summons or extended evictions was given to people. You can almost bank on the same visitors, year after year continuing to push the law. The visitor has learned over years, how much they can get away with. Most states in the country, and the National Park Service give law enforcement powers to Park Rangers and Managers.

The only training I received was in 2011 where I went through a basic 2 week Enforcement Academy with the forest rangers. There has been minimal training for me or anyone else that went through that training since then. No other defensive safety tactics training since then. This bill would help get myself and other staff yearly training to keep this stuff fresh in our minds. If you try to remember how to do calculus from college, I bet it is tough to remember (well, it is for me anyways). That is how I feel about the training I had in 2011, some of the most important aspects of the training I do not remember, like defensive tactics for safety. Of course, we may not need these, but there is a higher chance of people in our positions needing to use defensive tactics training, than the general public, so shouldn't we be competent in how to protect ourselves while working for the people of the state?

I have been part of a group of managers that works on our Ranger Academy training that we've been putting on the last two years. I do commend the Department for trying to get more training for our staff. And while I'm proud of a lot of the training, I do think there are several deficiencies that going through law enforcement Academy at the state level would help with. After the Resolve Mr. Skolfield submitted two years ago passed, and thank you all for that, we were supposed to train staff on law enforcement. While we have done a little of this, we only spent a total of about an hour on the components that were in Mr. Skolfield's Resolve. Meeting the letter of the law, but not the intention.

One component or amendment that I hope to see in the bill, is that any employee currently hired, would be exempt from this training if they do not wish to participate. Some of the long-term staff were hired for a job without the law enforcement training component and I feel that we should not force the few who may not want this, to do something they did not sign up for. I feel confident in saying the managers who may not want this training, still support the training for the managers and rangers who need it.

I ask the committee to please move this bill forward, if for nothing else, for the people who enjoy our state parks and for the protections of the park staff that are required by law, to enforce title 12 rules. The public has an expectation we enforce the rules and most view us as law enforcement. If I am required to enforce rules and regulations, I think I should have the tools to protect myself, protect the resource and protect the people as stated in law.

Thank you for your time,

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