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Testimony introducing
LD 1078, An Act To Promote Traffic Safety in Emergency Situations
Senator Cathy Breen
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Senator Deschambault, Representative Warren, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety, my name is Cathy Breen. I represent Maine Senate District 25, which includes the communities of Chebeague Island, Cumberland, Falmouth, Gray, Long Island, Yarmouth, and about half of the City of Westbrook. I am here to introduce **LD 1078, An Act To Promote Traffic Safety in Emergency Situations**.

This bill was brought to me by a police chief in my district. This simple change in statute could help small police departments like his by allowing trained traffic flaggers to serve their communities as non-sworn police officers.

Under current law, only a trained public safety traffic flagger has authority to direct traffic in an accident, emergency or disaster. This person must be a municipal firefighter authorized by its chief, or a member of a licensed emergency medical service — or EMS — authorized by its chief official.

This bill proposes that a police department may use trained flaggers from a fire department or an EMS to direct traffic in an emergency, bringing them under the authority of the police chief as non-sworn officers.

In many cases, trained flaggers have retained the skills required to direct traffic but can't meet the physical standards for fire departments or EMS. This bill allows police departments in Maine to take on these units if the fire departments or EMS no longer want to manage them.

Small police departments in Maine are experiencing the same struggles to retain staff as other industries throughout the state. Allowing these trained professionals to manage traffic during emergencies represents a win-win: Folks with the skills to manage traffic would be able to serve their communities and contribute to public safety, while members of understaffed police departments with limited resources could focus on the incident at hand.

Please support LD 1078 in order to help our police officers focus on their important work. I am happy to take questions.