



Maine Sheriffs' Association

"One Team, One Mission"

Sheriff Troy Morton, President

Sheriff William King, 1st Vice-President, Sheriff Dale Lancaster, 2nd Vice-President – Sheriff Barry Curtis, Secretary – Sheriff Todd Brackett, Treasurer – Sheriff Kevin Joyce, Immediate Past President – Sheriff Joel Merry, Past President-at-Large - Mary-Anne LaMarre, Executive Director

April 16, 2021

L.D. 513 – An Act Regarding the Membership of the Board of Trustees of the Maine Criminal Justice Academy and Its Complaint Review Committee

Senator Dechambault, Representative Warren, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety,

My name is Joel Merry. I am the Sheriff of Sagadahoc County and the Past-President at Large for the Maine Sheriffs' Association. Maine sheriffs met to discuss this bill and our position is to offer Qualified Support for L.D. 513.

While there are four bills regarding the composition of the MCJA board being considered in today's public hearing, our legislative policy committee scrutinized each one and ultimately chose this bill to stake our position. We feel that this bill collectively addresses all concerns targeted in the other bills, with the additional facet of addressing the Academy's complaint review committee.

The Maine Criminal Justice Academy endeavors to merit public confidence in Maine's criminal justice system. Through training and policy development, the Academy's positive contributions to law enforcement across the state are undeniable. Their Board of Trustees works tirelessly to ensure they are maintaining high ethical standards while promoting cooperation and coordination among law enforcement agencies across the state.

Some may argue that one more seat on a board as big as the existing board of eighteen is inconsequential. Maine sheriffs disagree. We support the concept of allowing a County Commissioner to serve in the citizen's seat, which currently stands vacant, or as a rotation with a Municipal Official seat. We're concerned that increasing the board could become cumbersome and ultimately reduce efficacy.

Our unanimous support of increasing the complaint review committee stems from the indisputable fact that the current Board could benefit from having more of its members involved. This valuable committee is tasked with reviewing complaints lodged against law enforcement professionals who have allegedly mis stepped. Accountability for law enforcement is not only necessary, but those of us who serve with honor and integrity insist on transparency. Any means toward that end can and must be implemented.

Maine's Sheriffs ask that you recognize the potential adverse impact of increasing the number of seats on the Board of Trustees. We also encourage you to endorse the addition of two more seats to the Board's complaint review committee.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be pleased to answer any questions you might have.

Sincerely,
Sheriff Joel Merry
o/b/o Maine Sheriffs' Association