



Maine Sheriffs' Association

"One Team, One Mission"

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May 5, 2021

L.D. 1170 – An Act Regarding Unauthorized Possession of a Firearm in a Correctional Facility

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

My name is Troy Morton. I am Sheriff of Penobscot County and the President of the Maine Sheriffs' Association. Maine sheriffs' unanimous position is to support *L.D. 1170 – An Act Regarding Unauthorized Possession of a Firearm in a Correctional Facility.*

When Maine's sheriffs met in July of 2020, to discuss potential legislation for the incoming 130th legislature, the topic of carrying firearms within jails and their campuses was presented. For a myriad of reasons, which I'll present below, it became crystal clear that this legislation was needed.

The focus of this bill is to prevent unarmed correctional facilities becoming targets of opportunity. Our corrections' staff are being asked to manage significantly greater challenges, year after year. Inmate recreation areas, bail processes, and visitation areas all present clear and potentially dangerous outcomes unless we enact boundaries that would prohibit carrying firearms onto jail grounds.

When we began to evaluate those most likely to be harmed should criminal acts take place, the list included victims, co-defendants, witnesses, staff, service providers, inmates, inmates' family members, and many other innocent people that would assume they were in a safe environment. Unarmed correctional staff, in particular, could be potentially targets of retaliation.

The motivation behind L.D. 1170 is one that cannot be evaluated by partisan positions, but rather, a common-sense approach that we simply have not implemented in statute. Maine sheriffs collectively agree that firearms have no place in our jails or on our jail campuses. We urge you to see the value in this preventive legislation and vote unanimously to pass L.D. 1170.

Thank you for your consideration and it would be my pleasure to answer your questions.

Sincerely,

Sheriff Troy Morton
President, Maine Sheriffs' Association