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*Testimony of Rep. Lori K. Gramlich presenting*

### **LD 1447, An Act to Require Training in Racial Issues, Racial Justice and Social Issues at the Maine Criminal Justice Academy and To Establish Additional Requirements for Law Enforcement and Candidates**

*Before the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety*

Senator Deschambault, Representative Warren and distinguished colleagues of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety, I am Lori Gramlich, Representative for House District 13, which is the town of Old Orchard Beach. I am pleased to present **LD 1447, An Act to Require Training in Racial Issues, Racial Justice and Social Issues at the Maine Criminal Justice Academy and To Establish Additional Requirements for Law Enforcement and Candidates.**

By way of background, I wanted to provide some context for my submission of this legislation for your consideration. As many of you know, I am a social worker, practicing in affecting systemic change in the public policy arena for nearly 40 years. What many may not know is that I come from a family of law enforcement. My grandfather, whom I adored, was Lieutenant for the Rochester Police Department in New York State. His son, my uncle, followed in his footsteps. I, too, thought that a career in law enforcement would be my professional path but, as mentioned, ended up in social work.

I recall my uncle preparing to become a police officer. At the time in New York State, he was required to attain his associate's degree in criminal justice and did so attending our Monroe Community College in Rochester, New York. These were the 1970s and, indeed, times were quite different. I am convinced, however, that we will forever have more to learn in our desired professions.

I, for example, as a Licensed Master Social Worker, had to obtain both an undergraduate bachelor's degree as well as a master's degree, and in order to maintain my license, I must have 24 contact hours of education every two years, with four hours of ethics being mandatory. Additionally, all licensed social workers must complete 12 contact hours of domestic violence training.

My brother, who is a master plumber, was required to have a minimum of at least one year with 2,000 hours of work in the field of plumbing installations as a licensed journeyman plumber or a minimum of at least four years with 8,000 hours of work in the field of plumbing installations as a licensed trainee plumber under the supervision of a licensed master plumber.

Other professionals have varying levels of training and requirements for their specified occupations. For example, cosmetologists and barbers must have 2,500 hours of training to become licensed, and massage therapists must have 500 hours of core curriculum plus 120 hours of contact curriculum, as well as completion of a 750-hour training course.

I reference these requirements in other professions by way of perspective.

As I presume that you know, Basic Law Enforcement Training Program (BLETP) is an 18-week, 720-hour program with a goal to educate cadets in the basic tenets of being a modern law enforcement officer. According to the department's webpage, cadets will learn the importance of chain of command, lifetime fitness and being physically fit, report writing, understanding the principles of community policing, effective communications, and the ability to problem-solve and "think on their feet," all with strong ethical oversight standards. Additionally, every law enforcement officer in the state must meet ongoing training requirements in order to maintain certification, which is a good start. We can do more.

The University of Maine at Augusta, for example, is currently working on a 60-credit-hour associate's degree in community policing. Their curriculum speaks directly to some of the requirements outlined in LD 1447, including criminal justice, sociology, psychology, mental health, substance use disorder, and racial and implicit bias.

Further, [Illinois](#), [Nevada](#), [New Jersey](#) and [North Dakota](#) require a bachelor's degree or an associate degree with law enforcement experience, according to a survey by two groups.

[Kentucky](#), [Minnesota](#), [Oklahoma](#), [Pennsylvania](#) and [Wisconsin](#) require an associate degree with some alternatives for other training, and [Idaho](#) requires two years of college attendance. Some other states also require at least some college credits.

And in California, for example, organizations encompassing both police chiefs and rank-and-file officers are proposing legislation in the wake of recent civil unrest that they say would raise standards for police recruiting and training while increasing diversity.

LD 1447 requires basic law enforcement training to include additional training in racial issues and racial justice, regarding persons with substance use disorder, and regarding social issues and law enforcement responses to challenging social situations. Additional in-service training for law enforcement officers will include information on behavioral health, substance use disorder, homelessness, racial issues and racial justice, and other social situations that might be presented to a law enforcement officer.

Beginning with applications for certification and recertification on January 1, 2022, this bill requires an applicant for certification or recertification as a law enforcement officer to be legally authorized to work in this country, to be at least 21 years of age, to possess a high school diploma or high school equivalency diploma and an associate's degree in criminal justice with an emphasis on coursework in sociology, psychology, mental health, substance use disorder and implicit bias.

The world is indeed vastly different from the days when my beloved grandfather and uncle so proudly served. My goal with LD 1447 is to assure that the law enforcement personnel of today have the most effective tools in their toolbox to be equipped and responsive to the complex and diverse situations that they now find themselves encountering.

I urge you to vote unanimously LD 1447. Thank you for your consideration. I would be happy to try to answer any questions for you.