



Maine Sheriffs' Association

"One Team, One Mission"

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May 12, 2021

L.D. 1585 – An Act To Increase Privacy and Security by Prohibiting the Use of Facial Surveillance by Certain Government Employees and Officials

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

My name is Tim Carroll. I am the Sheriff of Knox County and here today on behalf of the Maine Sheriffs' Association. Maine sheriffs met to discuss this bill and our position is **to OPPOSE** L.D. 1585 – An Act To Increase Privacy and Security by Prohibiting the Use of Facial Surveillance by Certain Government Employees and Officials.

Maine sheriffs are unanimously opposed this bill.

Supporters of this bill may tell you that facial recognition software utilized by law enforcement is an erosion of privacy. Claims may also be made to indicate that this software is prone to misuse. I'm here to illustrate how disingenuous these allegations are, and ask that members of this committee recognize the indisputable value of this resource.

Maine sheriffs do not use facial recognition other than iris scans, which in a rural state like Maine, helps identify inmates as they move between correctional facilities. Iris scans, unlike other facial recognition software, has a 1 in 10 BILLION chance that two irises have even a 30% similarity. It was unclear to our legislative policy committee whether iris scans would be impacted by LD 1585, but we urge you to distinctly separate iris scans from this legislation.

Looking toward the future, prohibiting law enforcement from using tools that may play a role in protecting Maine citizens is not a responsible and open-minded approach. Twenty years ago, al-Qaeda terrorists passed through the Portland Jet Port before they ultimately caused a series of terrorist attacks that killed nearly 3,000 people. Facial recognition was not yet developed in 2001, but the question begs to be asked, how many lives could be saved if it had?

How many children have been saved from sex trafficking using facial recognition software? Thorn, a non-profit group that fights child sexual abuse, reports that 15,000 children have been saved since 2015, using facial recognition technology, and over 17,000 traffickers have been identified. Prohibiting facial recognition software in Maine would be a green light for child sex traffickers that Maine was a safe haven for their illicit and despicable operations.

In 2019, facial recognition was used by Michigan law enforcement to identify a killer who was targeting members of the LGBTQ+ community. After this criminal targeted and murdered three, he was brought in and charged with all three murders. While supporters of this legislation may share stories of how this bill will protect privacy of often discriminated populations, it's critical to remember that this technology will only improve, preventing hate crimes, child sexual trafficking, serial killings, and terrorist attacks.

These are just a few stories to illustrate how critical facial recognition software can be in stopping crime in our state. Maine sheriffs implore this committee to recognize the value of facial recognition software and unanimously vote to oppose LD 1585.

The MSA deeply appreciates the opportunity to specify our position on this well-intentioned legislation. I would be pleased to answer any questions you might have.

Sincerely,

Sheriff Tim Carroll
o/b/o Maine Sheriffs' Association