



STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY
MAINE DRUG ENFORCEMENT AGENCY

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**TESTIMONY OF DIRECTOR ROY E. MCKINNEY
MAINE DRUG ENFORCEMENT AGENCY**

OPPOSE

LD 1298, An Act to Provide Funds for Community-based Substance Use Disorder Treatment and Recovery Services and to Reduce by Half the Funding for the Maine Drug Enforcement Agency

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety
11 AM Wednesday, 12 May 2021

Senator Deschambault, Representative Warren, and other distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety, my name is Director Roy McKinney. I am here to testify on behalf of the Department of Public Safety and Maine Drug Enforcement Agency in opposition to LD 1298, “An Act to Provide Funds for Community-based Substance Use Disorder Treatment and Recovery Services and to Reduce by Half the Funding for the Maine Drug Enforcement Agency.”

This proposed legislation reduces by half the General Fund allocation for the Maine Drug Enforcement Agency, which will adversely impact Maine’s ability to disrupt the trafficking operations that supply Maine communities with opioids and other dangerous drugs. Fatal opioid overdoses and the availability of increasingly lethal forms of opioids are a Maine and a national crisis. An effective drug control strategy requires three fundamental lines of effort that are the heart of such a strategy – prevention, treatment and recovery, and reducing availability – which are complementary and mutually supporting. This legislation offers increases for treatment and recovery to the detriment of Maine’s statewide effort to reduce availability.

Investigating and disrupting opioid and other dangerous drug trafficking operations that impacts the availability of these drugs is a law enforcement response for which the Maine Drug Enforcement Agency is well-designed. While efforts to reduce availability is one of many activities of police departments, this program is singularly focused on disrupting the drug market in its effort to dismantle drug trafficking operations to impact availability. The investigative component of its task force groups is comprised of municipal, county, tribal and state officers – all with statewide authority. The largest component of the budget funds the payroll of those

officers assigned full-time to a task force team. This reimbursement allows the assigning agency to replace those officers that are assigned to a task force so that the community retains the same staffing level to serve their communities. Maine sheriffs and chiefs are committed to this statewide effort with their support of U.S. Department of Justice Byrne Justice Assistance grant funding being allocated to the Maine Drug Enforcement Agency.

The Agency's efforts focus on addressing the upper and mid-level drug dealers that operate below the interest of the Federal law enforcement authorities that focus on international, interstate, and substantial violators, and the street level efforts of uniformed agencies. Task force personnel are recognized throughout the Maine law enforcement community for their considerable expertise in conducting drug trafficking investigations and the fostering of federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement collaboration.

The policy that established Maine's statewide drug enforcement program and strategy over thirty years ago set forth that such is necessary to meet the threat to the health and safety posed by the distribution of scheduled drugs into, out of and within the state. A funding reduction that eliminates investigative staff will have a crippling impact on this program that employs a collaborative, multi-jurisdictional task force approach necessary to undermine the ability of drug suppliers to meet, expand, and profit from drug demand. The outcome of increased availability only expands the opportunity for individuals to initiate drug use, and the path from first use to chronic use can be especially short with the potent and highly addicting drugs.

On behalf of the Department of Public Safety and Maine Drug Enforcement Agency, I thank you for your time and will be pleased to answer any questions that you may have.