



# Maine Sheriffs' Association

*"One Team, One Mission"*

**Sheriff Dale Lancaster, President**

Sheriff Timothy Carroll, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice-President, Sheriff William King, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-President – Sheriff Barry Curtis, Secretary – Sheriff Todd Brackett, Treasurer – Sheriff Troy Morton, Immediate Past President – Sheriff Joel Merry, Past President-at-Large - Mary-Anne LaMarre, Executive Director

---

March 4, 2022

## **L.D. 1479 – An Act To Make Some Traffic Infractions Secondary Offenses**

Senator Deschambault, Representative Warren, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety, my name is Timothy Carroll, the Sheriff of Knox County and the 1<sup>st</sup> Vice-President of the Maine Sheriffs Association and I'm here today on their behalf. Maine sheriffs discussed this bill and voted unanimously to **oppose** L.D. 1479 – An Act To Make Some Traffic Infractions Secondary Offenses.

This legislature has demonstrated a deep investment in saving the lives of Mainers during this session. We've seen a commitment to increase syringe distribution to reduce the sharing of contaminated needles, and we've heard testimony from dozens who hope to expand the Good Samaritan law in an effort to save more lives from overdoses. The number of overdose deaths in Maine last year is a number everyone in this room as heard repeatedly this session, 636. It's clear that this 130<sup>th</sup> legislature is committed to finding ways to save the lives of the people we serve. Why then, would this same legislative body support a bill that so clearly endangers the lives of Maine people?

How many unnecessary deaths are too many? We would argue that any death that could have been prevented is too many. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), is the national public health agency for the nation. This well-respected agency has a trademark, "CDC 24/7: Saving Lives, Protecting People". This agency **adamantly** endorses wearing seat belts and they note that wearing a seatbelt can reduce the risk of death by nearly 50%.

While researching all facets of this bill, we learned that insurance companies speculate that passage of LD 1479 would likely increase auto insurance rates. MaineBiz recently released data that identifies Maine's economy is the eighth worst in our country. Passage of a bill that would potentially cause greater financial hardship on our state cannot be undertaken without ascertaining the financial impact on Maine's drivers.

The most disconcerting aspect of this bill, however, is its disregard for the safety and well-being of Maine's children. Perhaps many parents would continue to safely secure their children in vehicles by choice if the requirement to do so became a secondary offense. But if even one parent made the choice to disregard the need to buckle their young child, that's one child whose life was endangered by the passage of LD 1479.

There are many components to the inspection criteria of vehicles traversing our roadways and most are unseen to a law enforcement officer which can lead to unsafe motor vehicles. If a vehicle passes by an officer with an inspection sticker that expired in June of last year, it hasn't passed an inspection since June of 2020. This vehicle may not have adequate brakes or an improper steering mechanism impairing its operation. If LD 1479 were to pass, the officer must disregard the expired inspection as the vehicle goes down the road and potentially crashes. If they had been able to stop the vehicle,

they may have discovered critical safety issues that could be addressed immediately, preventing the tragedy of an inevitable accident.

Most of these laws have been developed and have remained in statute for years for no other reason than for the safety of the people and the motoring traffic on our public ways. With this law we are saying Maine citizens are de minimis and unless otherwise worthy of stopping a vehicle for another, more serious offense, not important. With this law, this legislative body is saying safety of the people we serve is SECONDARY!!

Reducing the enforcement efforts for people to wear seat belts and safely secure our children to a secondary offense, along with the other identified infractions, is irresponsible. While Maine sheriffs strive to work with legislators to craft laws that are in best interest of all Maine citizens, we unanimously and aggressively oppose LD 1479, and we urge all members of this committee to join us in our opposition.

Maine sheriffs appreciate the opportunity to present to this committee. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Sheriff Timothy Carroll  
1<sup>st</sup> Vice-President, Maine Sheriffs' Association