



MAINE CHIEFS OF POLICE ASSOCIATION

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Statement of Support to L.D. 550, An Act to Increase Correctional Officer Salary and Benefit May 9, 2023

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury, and members of the distinguished Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety. My name is Charles Rumsey. I am the Chief of the Cumberland Police Department, and the President of the Maine Chiefs of Police Association. I am submitting testimony on behalf of the Maine Chiefs of Police Association in support to LD 550.

The Mission of the Maine Chiefs of Police is to secure a closer official and personal relationship among Maine Police Officials; to secure a unity of action in law enforcement matters; to enhance the standards of police personnel, police training and police professionalism generally; to devise ways and means for equality of law enforcement throughout the state of Maine; to advance the prevention and detection of crime; to prescribe to the Law Enforcement Code of Ethics; and to promote the profession of law enforcement as an integral and dedicated force in today's society sworn to the protection of life and property.

According to the concept draft bill summary,
proposes to increase the base salary and benefits provided to correctional officers in order to aid efforts to recruit and retain correctional officers.

Although we have not seen the final language of the bill, the Maine Chiefs are generally in support to LD 1290 and all efforts that would recruit and retain all public safety employees including correctional officers. We believe that robust staffing at correctional facilities supports not just the workers but also the residents of the facilities. Facilities that are understaffed can lead to unsafe conditions for all involved and the State should be doing everything it can to encourage correctional officers to join and stay in the job.

Over the past several years, many areas of the state have experienced critical staffing shortages in county jails. These shortages have resulted in jails restricting the types of arrests that they will accept. These restrictions negatively impact the safety and quality of life in the communities we are sworn to protect. We consider the staffing shortages being experienced in corrections across the state to be a critical public safety crisis.

For these reasons, we would ask you to support LD 1290 and vote ought to pass on this bill. On behalf of the Maine Chiefs of Police Association, we want to thank the committee members for your work on this Committee.