



# Maine Sheriffs' Association

*"One Team, One Mission"*

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February 10, 2021

## **L.D. 58 – An Act To Improve Information Sharing by Criminal Justice Agencies with Government Agencies Responsible for Investigating Child or Adult Abuse**

Senator Brenner, Representative Tucker, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, my name is Kevin Joyce. I am the Sheriff of Cumberland County and Immediate Past President of the Maine Sheriffs' Association. Maine sheriffs met to discuss this bill and our unanimous position is to support L.D. 8.

In 2010, the Federal Drug Enforcement Agency started a national program, called Drug Take Back. Under the leadership of Resident Agent in Charge for the State of Maine, Michael Wardrop, he worked with County, State and Local law enforcement to begin the bi-annual Drug Take Back event.

The Maine Sheriffs' Association has provided support for Mike Wardrop for the past nine years by coordinating the delivery of collection boxes, plastic bags and event posters to the local law enforcement agencies in all sixteen counties. In fact, the supplies for each drug take back event are typically dropped at the Cumberland County Sheriff's Office in Portland for distribution statewide. Cumberland County Sheriff's Office Police Volunteers pick up the supplies about a month prior to each event and travel throughout the State of Maine delivering the supplies for each county and the law enforcement agencies in that county.

On each drug take back day, virtually every law enforcement agency in the State of Maine participates from 10:00-14:00 collecting unused medications in their respective jurisdictions. At 14:00, the unused medications that have been collected on that day and on the days leading up to the national event are boxed up and moved throughout the state to the Cumberland County Sheriff's Office and stored in a secure area for the evening. On the following day, members of Federal DEA, Maine Drug Enforcement and other law enforcement agencies take the unused medications to Eco-Maine in Portland for incineration.

For the last ten years, the State of Maine has collected approximately 40,000 pounds of unused medications during the two Drug Take Back collection events. In fact, the State of Maine has had the unfortunate distinction of being one of the states with the highest collection rates per capita, in the nation. That is a lot of unused medications that haven't been flushed into a sewer system

and eventually back into our environment, as well as out of the hands of children or individuals suffering with a substance use disorder.

As long as this project is supported and funded by Federal DEA, this an excellent public service for local law enforcement and an indisputable crime prevention tool. While the costs of staff overtime to prepare and complete the event is shared by local law enforcement, and the cost of destruction is provided by Federal DEA, the program works very well. If one of these partners fails to continue participating, the current drug take back program and its success will be negatively impacted.

For instance, prior to 2015, the Cumberland County Sheriff's Officer stored all unused medications in our secured evidence storage room until the next drug take back event. This consisted of unused medication collected in our drug take back box that is accessible twenty-four hours a day in the lobby of the Cumberland County Jail. It also consisted of unused medications collected by our Community Policing Deputy between events from citizens who wanted to get rid of unused medication or nursing homes that wanted to purge their unused medications. However, in 2015, the Cumberland County Sheriff's Office became nationally accredited and as a result, we could no longer stockpile the unused medications in our evidence room. It left our agency two solutions, establish a secure facility with alarms and video surveillance or take the unused medications to Eco-Maine on our own. Due to the high cost of destruction on our own, we were forced to establish a new storage location that met national accreditation standards.

In closing, the National Drug Take Back program is a gold star project that all law enforcement should be proud of. There are significant amounts of medications that go unused each and every year. There are few ecological and safe ways to get rid of the unused medications and incinerating them seems to be the best method although costly. As long as the Federal Government continues to fund the destruction, I believe that it is safe to say that the Nation Drug Take Back events will continue and Maine will continue to deliver record amounts of unused medications.

Thank you for listening and I am prepared to answer any questions.

Sheriff Kevin Joyce, Cumberland County  
Immediate Past-President, Maine Sheriffs' Association