



Maine Chiefs of Police Association

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Statement in opposition to

L.D. 340, An Act Regarding Speedy Trials

Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

March 3, 2025

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and honorable members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Jason Moen. I am the Chief of the Auburn 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 opposition to LD 340.

The mission of the Maine Chiefs of Police Association 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.

This bill establishes different time limits for the commencement of a defendant's criminal trial based on the date of arraignment and what class of crime with which the defendant is charged. Beginning in January of 2027, those time limits would range from 12 to 24 months based on the class of crime. Those time limits would be shortened in tiers with final time periods set at 24 months (murder or Class A), 9 months (Class B and Class C), and 6 months (Class D and Class E) by January 1, 2031. Some provisions within the bill allow for a delay in the start of a trial based on factors related to the defense. Upon motion by the defendant, the court must dismiss the case if it finds that the defendant's trial did not start within the applicable time limit or any enlargement of that limit.

Just this past week, the Judiciary Committee held a public hearing on LD 374. You heard from many organizations, including the Maine Chiefs of Police Association, about the workforce shortage faced by prosecutors' offices throughout Maine. Recruiting talented attorneys to fill

these public positions has proven difficult when private practices and public defenders can pay a much higher salary from day one.

We agree that a key component of keeping our communities safe is ensuring that criminal cases proceed through the courts in a timely manner. Unfortunately, with a reduced number of prosecutors comes increased caseloads and a backlog of cases. Until this issue is addressed, it will be extremely difficult to adhere to the time limits outlined in this legislation.

This bill would have a serious impact on victims. The proposal does not guarantee the ability for an enlargement of time for the unavailability of witnesses; it is only one of three factors that a court may consider when deciding if an extended time limit should be granted. For those cases in which there may only be a small number of expert witnesses, it could have a significant impact on the outcome of a case.

Additionally, prosecutors may be faced with the reality of dismissing cases for lower-level crimes. Some of these lower-level but significant crimes would include criminal mischief, theft, assault, and harassment. All of these crimes involve victims.

The Maine Chiefs of Police Association believes that LD 340 would be an erosion of public safety due to the inability to prosecute crimes impacting our communities and victimizing our residents. For that reason, we respectfully ask members to oppose the passage of this legislation.