



Troy D. Jackson
President of the Senate

THE MAINE SENATE
130th Legislature

3 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

Testimony in Support of LD 575
An Act To Establish a Conditional Presumption of Compensability for Certain Employees in Cases of Impairment from Hypertension or Heart Disease

Presented to the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing
March 8, 2021

Senator Rafferty, Representative Sylvester, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing,

My name is Troy Jackson and I represent the people of northern Aroostook County in Senate District 1. I am here today to extend my wholehearted support for LD 575, "An Act To Establish a Conditional Presumption of Compensability for Certain Employees in Cases of Impairment from Hypertension or Heart Disease."

Many studies have shown a correlation between workplace stress and elevated blood pressure.¹ According to the CDC, such hypertension increases the risk of heart disease, heart attack, and stroke.² A number of these studies have specifically documented the fact that correctional officers experience higher levels of stress than most other occupational groups.³ That is the reason for this bill. It creates a rebuttable presumption that a correctional officer, who has successfully passed a physical examination upon entering the profession or while in the profession and later contracts heart disease or hypertension, that the affliction is presumed to be due to employment. This presumption can be rebutted by the actions of the employee outside of the workplace.

Day in and day out, the men and women who hold these jobs walk into a high security building filled with people who have been incarcerated, many due to their lack of self-control, and have the doors locked behind them. Some of the inmates are violent, some are emotionally challenged, and some are mentally unstable. This makes the correctional worker's job unpredictable and highly stressful. Additionally, according to the American Journal of Hypertension, these law enforcement professionals often work long shifts making regular physical activity difficult. This

¹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3694268/>

² <https://www.cdc.gov/bloodpressure/about.htm>

³ <https://law.irank.org/pages/1791/Prisons-Correctional-Officers-Correctional-officer-stress.html>

shift work also disrupts normal sleep and dietary patterns.⁴ The physical toll, as well as the emotional toll, of the job, contributes to higher blood pressure rates, which may be the reason that “the average life span of correctional officers is fifty-nine years compared to a national average of seventy-five years.”⁵

So please, join me in showing your support for our correctional officers. LD 575 gives them a fighting chance when diagnosed with a life threatening illness. Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to entertain any questions, but know there are others who will follow me that have more experience on this issue.

Sincerely,
Troy Jackson
President of the Maine Senate
Senate District 1

⁴ <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/23389236>

⁵ <https://law.irank.org/pages/1791/Prisons-Correctional-Officers-Correctional-officer-stress.html>