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"In Valor There Is Hope"

**Joint Committee on Labor and Housing - Hearing Testimony
By Paul Gaspar, Executive Director; Maine Association of Police**

LD 1103" An Act to Allow a 5-year Open Enrollment in the Participating Local District Retirement Program for Certain Law Enforcement Officers, Firefighters and Other Municipal Employees"

April 9th, 2021

Good morning Senator Hickman, Representative Sylvester, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing. My name is Paul Gaspar, and I am the executive director of the Maine Association of Police. We represent over 50 municipal agencies and more than 950 sworn law enforcement officers and public safety dispatchers. On behalf of our members and fellow first responders throughout the state of Maine, I am here today to offer comments neither for nor against LD 1103, "An Act to Allow a 5-Year Open Enrollment in the Participating Local District Retirement Program for Certain Law Enforcement Officers, Firefighters and Other Municipal Employees."

We are extremely appreciative of legislators such as Senators Bailey and Baldacci for their concern and support of those who elect a career of municipal service throughout our state, cities and towns. As sponsors of LD's 1103 and 711, they are creating an opportunity to provide security and peace of mind to those serving during a turbulent time.

Our first responders and municipal employees exemplify what is right about the state of Maine. Their calling to service provides the very health, safety, and security so highly sought after by those wanting to make one of the safest states in the nation their place to live. This commitment is continually tested and tempered by unprecedented changes in our political and social divisions, as well as our public health.

These changes have come with consequences that relate in staffing shortages, attrition in existing ranks, and the burgeoning recruitment of those possessing the interest and will to embark on a full career in public service. Recently we have seen the very real effect that having a defined path to financial security after that service, has been a tangible stopgap measure in both seeking and retaining a long term commitment to the people of Maine.

LD 1103 provides an opportunity to continue this effort by providing options for recruiting as well as newly serving employees once they have adjusted to the initial settling in after entering municipal service. Our position of neither for nor against is only rooted in our additional responsibility of due diligence in addressing the impact of mid election enrollments on the health and viability of the MPERS system for its existing members. Addressing the impact as well as the costs being born on the individual seeking enrollment as addressed in LD 711 would be an important factor in championing this important effort.

Thank you.

Website: www.maineassociationofpolice.com