

Testimony of Lt. Robert Elliot

Qualified Support of LD 1671

Resolve, to Implement Security Screenings in the State House and Capitol Area Offices

Senator Baldacci, Rep. Mattack and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government. My name is Lt. Robert Elliot and I am the interim leader of the Maine Capitol Police. I am providing testimony today on behalf of the Department of Public Safety and the Maine Capitol Police on LD 1671.

This bill, if passed, would require the Commissioner of Public Safety to implement procedures to increase safety protocols within the State House and State Office Building Complex. This would include: screening all who enter the Cross State Office Building and the State House for weapons or other prohibited items, limiting the number of public entrances, and prioritizing the screening of Legislators, State and Legislative employees and Lobbyists over that of constituents and members of the public. It also would direct the Legislative Council to adopt rules to make changes to the security screening procedures to include requiring all who enter the State House to be screened for weapons and prioritizing screening there as well.

Given the increased concerns for safety and security in our nation and here in Maine, I strongly agree that weapons screening in the Burton Cross Building is overdue and would be a welcome safeguarding measure. ~~I also agree that p~~Protocols, such as who should be required to be screened, access controls and access point limitations, as well ~~as~~ policy reviews should be updated and adjusted to help obtain the ultimate goal of providing a safe and secure environment for all.

Obviously, this initiative will come at a cost. There will be a need for added staffing manpower, technology, equipment, and architectural upgrades.

I welcome a resolve to push this initiative for weapons screening forward and to make it a priority. However, details such as who should be screened, which doors should be accessible and so on should be left to the Legislative Council and Executive Branch Leaders in consultation with the Chief of Capitol Police and the Commissioner of Public Safety. A report outlining options for security screening at the Burton Cross Building was submitted by the Maine Capitol Police former MCP Chief Gauvin to the State House Faculties Committee in February of 2020. That report outlines several options for screening and the associated challenges and benefits of each. I feel that report sets a good foundation to make plans to bring weapons screening to a reality in the Burton Cross Building.

On behalf of the Department of Public Safety and the Maine Capitol Police, I thank you for consideration.

Steven Trahan
Department of Public Safety, Bureau of Capitol Police

I am presenting this on behalf of LT. Elliot