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Testimony of Representative Morgan Rielly presenting

LD 625, “Resolve, Directing a Review of Crucial Needs and Lapses in Responding to and Preventing Sexual Trauma in the Maine National Guard”
before the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs

Good morning Senator Luchini, Representative Caiazzo, and fellow members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs. I am Representative Morgan Rielly, and I represent House District 34, which includes part of Westbrook. I am here today to present **LD 625, Resolve, Directing a Review of Crucial Needs and Lapses in Responding to and Preventing Sexual Trauma in the Maine National Guard.**

This resolve directs the Adjutant General to conduct a review of the implementation of the recommendations made to this committee outlined in [Resolve 2013, chapter 66](#). Additionally, this legislation assists in identifying any crucial needs and lapses in responding to and preventing military sexual trauma in the Maine National Guard to determine if additional action is indeed necessary.

The report compiled by the Maine National Guard, in response to the resolve passed as a result of LD 1504 in the 126th Legislature, reported back that “MENG is currently complying with many of the 14 discussion points below as outlined in the NDAA 2013 and subsequent policies or regulations at the national level.” And, “in some instances, the National Guard is not able to fully comply with the proposals below due to programs and policies outside of our control.” However, there are several discussion points from the report that are worth re-looking at that include but are not limited to the following: **a)** the mandatory administrative separation or dismissal of any member of the Maine National Guard convicted of any sexual offense, **b)** allowing victims to return to active duty after separation to help prosecute sex offenders, **c)** the creation of an independent review panel to examine the way sexual assaults are investigated, prosecuted and adjudicated under the Maine Code of Military Justice, **d)** and the annual command climate assessment surveys along with the required sexual assault prevention and intervention in precommand and command courses for officers and relevant personnel.

According to the [Department of Defense Fiscal Year 2019 Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military](#), sexual assault reports among service members increased by 3 percent compared to Fiscal Year 2018. In Fiscal Year 2019, 6,236 reports were made, up from 6,053 the year prior. The Department is unsure if this increase is due to an increase in reporting or incidents, but there are measurements in place to regularly assess the efficacy of their efforts to reduce sexual trauma among service members.

I commend the Maine National Guard Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program for their work in reducing and addressing sexual trauma. The National Guard has made their commitment to eliminating incidents of sexual assault and trauma through awareness and prevention training clear, however, I believe that continued examination of response and prevention services is necessary to ensure the safety of those who continue to devote their lives to serve our state and our nation.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions or to provide you with any information for the upcoming work session.