

April 10, 2019

Testimony in support of **LD 1355, An Act To Expand the 1998 Special Retirement Plan To Include Civilian Employees Who Work for the Department of Public Safety Crime Lab and Computer Crimes Unit.** – Senator Bill Diamond of Cumberland.

Senator Bellows, Representative Sylvester and distinguished members of the Committee on Labor and Housing.

My name is David Armstrong and I have been employed by the Maine State Police for the past 33 years, 27 years as a Maine State Trooper and the past six years as a Special Agent with the Maine State Police Computer Crimes Unit investigating Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC). As a Maine State Trooper, my experiences have varied greatly, ranging from aiding a motorist to viewing deceased bodies at a homicide scene. However, in all my 33 years in law enforcement, the past six years have been the most impressionable, and not in a positive way. The cases I now investigate are the most horrific cases of my entire career. My job is to investigate complaints of detected images and/or videos of children **of all ages** being sexually assaulted and victimized. I am tasked with developing a case demonstrating probable cause so that a search warrant can be obtained and digital media devices legally seized. As traumatic as the images/videos are that I see, I only need to view enough of them to warrant probable cause. Once digital devices are legally seized, it is not the job of the detective to forensically search the computer for additional images/videos. This is done by the civilian Computer Forensic Analysts of the State Police Computer Crimes Unit. The analysts are responsible for uncovering additional evidence which will most likely secure a conviction for the case. The analysts physically look through all sexually explicit files of children, both images and videos. They are required to do more than just glance at these files. The expectation is to investigate each file closely and carefully so that an age determination of the child can accurately be made. The volume of images and videos our analysts repeatedly view in a day is immense. Very few people would be willing to perform this task 40+ hours a week. In fact, when I present such images to a judge, in order to acquire a search warrant, many times I am advised to secure these ‘type of images’ so that court personnel do not have to be exposed to them for worry of trauma and undue stress. In fact, some Judges are reluctant to look at these images altogether for fear it will create an everlasting image in their mind, stating that they do not know how anyone can do this job day after day. Yet, our forensic analysts repeatedly view these sexually explicit images and videos of children all day long,

everyday. Each of the highly trained and qualified analysts I work closely with on these cases, have young children of their own at home ranging from ages 10 years to 10 months old and one is even due in 2 months. Each time I hand computers, cell phones or any other digital devices to an analyst, I think about what they are going to be subjected to, repeatedly. I cannot help but feel some level of guilt that I am secretly grateful that I am not the one doing that part of the investigation. Of all the experiences I have had as a Maine State Trooper and current Special Agent, none compare to the life altering and mind impacting job of a computer crimes analyst. We must do whatever necessary to retain these highly specialized and willing individuals who do the job that very few would even consider. Let's not lose them to a less stressful computer analyst job in the private sector. The helpless child victims, whose predators our analysts' have aided in prosecuting, would surely cast a vote to support the true heroes investigating today's digital media crime.

Sincerely,

David Armstrong

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