

Honorable members of the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee, thank you for your time. My name is Adam McKay, from Poland Maine. I am a state park manager and wanted to express my personal thoughts on bill LD 527. These are my thoughts, and not the departments.

LD 527 would provide needed training, safety equipment, and tools for park staff to protect the resource as they are required to do. State parks see almost 3 million people a year, and we are required to enforce the rules in title 12. Currently I am unable to have any protection from attacks, like body armor or chemical spray. I am no different when enforcing rules and regulations as outside law enforcement, I still face the same risks, where I do not know anything about the person we're interacting with. But I do not have the tools they have to protect themselves. The visitor could be on drugs, alcohol, or have some kind of psychological issue. It is not a matter of if something will happen to a staff member, it is a matter of when.

Another tool for safety that I do not have, is the ability to check licenses and run that information to see what kind of situation I am about to get into with somebody. This would allow me to at least get some background information before talking to an individual. Right now I cannot do that, so I have no idea if I'm talking to somebody that has prior dangerous convictions.

Our incident reports only reflect a small amount of the enforcement interactions I have on a yearly basis. Some of these are very friendly and just educational. They do not warrant any further enforcement. This bill would not change that strategy. But what it would do, is allow me to write summonses for title 12 regulations, that occur in the park. People often either just leave, or face no repercussions because many outside officers do not want to enforce title 12. I think we would see more compliance if either the threat of, or the actual summons was given to people.

The only training I received was in 2011 where I went through a basic Enforcement Academy with the forest rangers. There has been minimal training since then. No other defensive safety tactics training since then.

I ask the committee to please move this bill forward, if for nothing else, for the protections of the park staff that are required by law, to enforce title 12 rules. The public has an expectation we enforce the rules. If I am required to enforce rules and regulations, I think I should have the tools to protect myself and protect the resource as stated in law. Once again, thank you for your time.