



**Testimony of Lieutenant Paul Edwards of the Bangor Police Department
Before the**

Joint Standing Committees on Taxation and Appropriations and Financial Affairs

Regarding the Proposed Budget for FY 16 and FY 17

February 18, 2015

Sen. Hamper, Rep. Rotundo, Senator McCormick, Representative Goode and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Taxation, my name is Paul Edwards and I am Lieutenant in the Bangor Police Department. I am testifying today against proposed changes to the budget that would eliminate Revenue Sharing.

If approved, the proposed budget will eliminate Revenue Sharing in two years. The net effect is that the City would lose over \$5 million in statutory revenues that are designated for service delivery in Bangor. The decrease to Bangor over the next biennium is over \$2 million. As you know, Revenue Sharing was implemented to aid in financing municipal services, such as police, fire and public works from the broad-based taxes of State government.

Bangor is a service center for central, eastern and northern Maine regions. What that means is that Bangor is home to a disproportionate number of federal, state and non-profit agencies representing 35% of the Bangor tax base. In general, Bangor has a lower median household income, higher rate of poverty, and higher mil rate than surrounding communities. As a service center our taxpayers end up supporting a huge inflow of commuters and visitors who pay property taxes elsewhere. The Revenue Sharing formula clearly recognized this burden and provided at least some relief to service center communities like Bangor.

It is no secret that Bangor is an urban hub in a rural state. Over the years there have been concerted fiscal and policy decisions by the State to centralize services within a service center communities like Bangor. With access to affordable housing and transit, Bangor residents have cautiously accepted regional services such as homeless shelters, methadone clinics, regional hospitals and federal and state government offices. However, it had always been with the understanding that the State would honor its statutory promise of Revenue Sharing to assist property tax payers with those issues that presented as more regional in nature such as mental health, substance abuse etc...

The City of Bangor maintains a sworn force of 80 police officers which would not be required if for a typical "bedroom community" of 33,000. It is necessary, in large part, because of the influx of commuters and visitors that take advantage of employment and services provided in



the City. Further, the Bangor Police Department has had to maintain a number of specialty teams such as the special response team, accident reconstruction, explosive ordnance detection, etc... The need to maintain these specialties is directly tied to the population we serve, which is statistically different from the populations in surrounding communities.

On average, the Bangor Police Department responds to 100 calls for service each day. Given that Maine is a rural and geographically large state, police agencies must rely on one another to provide services in a timely manner. With the significant level of populace in our City on a daily basis, we are challenged to respond quickly to protect our citizens, commuters and visitors. Without the financial support of Revenue Sharing, reductions in policing mean that incidents like July 4th, 2013 and last week on Union Street may have had much different outcomes.

As a career law enforcement officer I would like to share some specific impacts seen in Bangor due to its role as a service center;

- Only 45% of Bangor residents own their home and 55% rent, which is significantly higher than State average;
- The median income in Bangor is \$36,246 which is 25% lower than the state average;
- Over 40,000 public safety calls a year, which is higher than the average per capita volume in the State; and
- 20% of calls are drug or mental illness related a statewide issue that must be dealt with locally by public safety, hospitals and homeless shelters.

As most of you know, the Police do not collect revenues as fines collected by the courts based on arrests by municipal police are remitted to the state. Police services in Bangor are primarily paid for through Revenue Sharing and property taxes. For 2015, the Bangor municipal tax levy is \$25.5 million; of that amount \$5.7 million is to support the Police Department. The proposed year two reduction in revenue sharing represents 36% of the taxes raise for police purposes.

Because municipalities like Bangor provide services and infrastructure to support businesses, commuters and visitors, the State of Maine is able to realize steady growth of sales or income taxes. Sharing even a small portion of those receipts with municipalities through Revenue Sharing should be upheld.

Thank you for your time and attention.

For additional Information, please feel free to contact any of the following municipal officials:

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