



SIERRA CLUB

MAINE CHAPTER

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To: Committee on Judiciary
From: David Gibson, Sierra Club Maine
Date: April 29, 2021
Re: Testimony in support of LD 214 and LD 1416: **An Act To Eliminate Qualified Immunity for Police Officers**

Senator Carney, Representative Harnett, and members of the Committee on Judiciary: my name is David Gibson, and I am a resident of Morrill. I am representing Sierra Club Maine and our 22,000 supporters and members across the state. We urge you to support: *LD 214 and LD 1416 to limit or Eliminate Qualified Immunity for Police Officers.*

The Sierra Club centers our work around the key principles of equity, justice and inclusion in every aspect of our work. We aim to transform ourselves and build a healthy, welcoming and sustainable community that celebrates people from all walks of life.

The US Constitution guarantees all citizens the right to due process of law, and the right to a speedy and public trial by an impartial jury. When law enforcement officials kill innocent Americans, they have unlawfully become the judge, jury and executioner. Providing law enforcement with 'qualified immunity' impedes the principle of liberty and justice for all. We recognize that being a law enforcement officer is a challenging profession and that the majority are well intentioned, honest members of the community.

No one is above the law. Those who are tasked with enforcing the law should be held to a HIGHER level of accountability, not be allowed to violate laws with impunity. Police officers and all law enforcement need to be held accountable for their actions. Nearly every day, innocent Americans are killed by law enforcement somewhere in the United States. Here in Maine, there have been dozens of times when police have used deadly force in just the last decade: https://www.maine.gov/ag/news/shooting_reports_archive.shtml There have undoubtedly been hundreds of examples of excessive use of force over the same time period.

As the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” When any group of citizens is allowed to break the law, it undermines justice for all citizens. Offering ‘qualified immunity’ to law enforcement undermines justice for all other Americans. It is therefore essential to remove ‘qualified immunity’ for law enforcement in Maine.

While much broader reforms are needed to increase accountability and reduce violence perpetrated by law enforcement, LD 214 and LD 1416 are an important step in the right direction.

Thank you Senator Carney and Representative Evangelos for bringing this legislation forward.

We ask the committee to vote
LD 214 and/or LD 1416 Ought to Pass.