

PLEASE NOTE: Legislative Information **cannot** perform research, provide legal advice, or interpret Maine law. For legal assistance, please contact a qualified attorney.

## **Resolve, To Direct the Commissioner of Health and Human Services To Establish a Blue Ribbon Task Force To Examine the Attorney General's Report Regarding Police Shootings as It Relates to Deaths of Persons with Mental Illness**

**Sec. 1 Blue ribbon task force established. Resolved:** That the Commissioner of Health and Human Services shall establish a blue ribbon task force to examine the 2008 Report of the Attorney General's Ad Hoc Task Force on the Use of Deadly Force by Law Enforcement Officers Against Individuals Suffering From Mental Illness and to establish recommendations and preferred protocols for nonlethal responses to situations in which the medical and mental health status of a person is unknown by law enforcement officers. The blue ribbon task force must include members who represent public safety, mental health care and judicial services, as well as members of the public; and be it further

**Sec. 2 Duties. Resolved:** That the blue ribbon task force shall:

1. Review the Attorney General's report and ascertain the issues raised and what recommendations were made concerning police shootings in confrontations and how the shootings relate to the deaths of people with mental illness. The ad hoc task force identified several areas that, if addressed, could decrease the incidence of situations requiring police to intervene under highly dangerous circumstances. The blue ribbon task force shall review these areas and determine if any further suggested legislation is advisable;

2. Review the findings of the Mental Health Homicide, Suicide and Aggravated Assault Review Board, established by Public Law 2007, chapter 609, and the report that was due to be submitted by January 30, 2009 for the conclusions and recommendations that the board provided;

3. Review the process and interaction of the major groups affected by this issue, including the judiciary, public safety and mental health fields, to better improve communication and goals between the groups and to achieve the appropriate response to situations that involve people with mental illness;

4. Review the relationship between law enforcement and people with mental illness in other states, especially in states with similar geographical, cultural and economic backgrounds. The blue ribbon task force shall review the role of substance abuse in situations in which the police are involved and determine best ways to address that issue as it relates to people with mental illness;

5. Review data from the National Alliance on Mental Illness, which rates Maine in its 2nd-highest tier of grading. Maine is one of only 6 states to receive this ranking. The blue ribbon task force shall report its recommendations for making the State one of the best in dealing appropriately with public safety situations that involve law enforcement and people with mental illness; and

6. Consider and make a recommendation about having a specially trained State Police tactical team respond to a dangerous situation involving a person with a mental illness; and be it further

**Sec. 3 Report. Resolved:** That the Commissioner of Health and Human Services shall submit a report that includes the findings and recommendations of the blue ribbon task force, including suggested legislation, for presentation to the Second Regular Session of the 124th Legislature by March 1, 2010.

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The Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety is authorized to introduce legislation related to the subject matter of the report to the Second Regular Session of the 124th Legislature upon receipt of the report.

## **SUMMARY**

This resolve requires the Commissioner of Health and Human Services to establish a blue ribbon task force to examine the Attorney General's recent report on the issue of police shootings in confrontations with people with mental illness and to recommend protocols to avoid lethal confrontations. The blue ribbon task force is also directed to review the findings of the recent report of the Mental Health Homicide, Suicide and Aggravated Assault Review Board and ways that the public safety, judicial system and mental health fields interrelate in order to improve communication. The task force will look at other states' procedures and protocols and review information from the National Alliance on Mental Illness. Finally, the task force shall make a recommendation about having a specially trained State Police tactical team respond to a dangerous situation involving a person with a mental illness. The commissioner will report to the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety by March 1, 2010 with recommendations and suggested legislation of the blue ribbon task force. The joint standing committee is authorized to submit legislation to the Second Regular Session of the 124th Legislature.