

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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Department of the Secretary of State

Bureau of Corporations, Elections and Commissions

Shenna Bellows
Secretary of State

Julie L. Flynn
Deputy Secretary of State

February 1, 2024

The Honorable Craig Hickman, Senate Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0100

The Honorable Laura Supica, House Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0100

Dear Senator Hickman, Representative Supica and Members of the Committee,

Maine election law, Title 21-A section 675, requires the Secretary of State to report annually “the number and type of reports of threats to or harassment of public officials received by the Secretary of State during the previous calendar year.” This report covers calendar year 2023.

We received no reports by municipal public officials of threats or harassment while conducting state or municipal elections in the State last year. We did receive some feedback from some clerks that the questions around the confidentiality of threat reports submitted to the Secretary of State may limit written submissions of reports to our office.

In 2023, as Secretary of State, I experienced threatening communications including an incident of swatting on December 29, 2023. On the Friday prior to Memorial Day of 2023, an online threat suggested that Memorial Day would be my “last Memorial Day.” The threat was investigated by the Secretary of State Division of Enforcement and referred to other authorities who were investigating the same individual for threats against other elected officials.

Starting Friday, December 29, 2023, the Department of Secretary of State received hundreds of threatening, abusive and aggressive communications by telephone, email and social media targeting not only me but also people working for the Department and members of my family. The Maine Information and Analysis Center (MIAC) worked to assist investigators with a review of all incoming communications. While working with investigators the MIAC utilized all resources at their disposal including consulting with out of state agencies as well as partner agencies within the State of Maine. Additionally, the MIAC worked closely with investigators utilizing all available information technology systems the MIAC readily utilizes to provide a clear threat picture so investigators could make informed decisions on next steps.

Additionally, we are pleased to report that we partnered with the Cybersecurity Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) and the FBI to provide de-escalation training for all interested municipal clerks for a second year in a row. We also implemented threat assessment and reporting training for the clerks and

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distributed a threat reporting form, which is attached to this report. We hosted a cybersecurity summit for clerks. Election security was a component of our general clerks training as well as a joint presentation conducted by me in collaboration with our CISA protective security advisor. Finally, we have expanded SAFE assessments to support clerks in reviewing the physical security of polling locations and clerks' offices to additional clerks through a partnership with CISA.

I look forward to working with you to ensure the safety and security of our municipal clerks and public officials. Please feel free to contact me at 626-8400 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Shenna Bellows
Secretary of State