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Making Sense of Tragic Police Shootings

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In January, Gov. Janet Mills **released a report** that she commissioned as attorney general reviewing the use of deadly force by police. Based on a review of 10 chosen cases, the report made several recommendations for police training around such issues as mental health, substance abuse, domestic violence, and crisis intervention.

The press release caught my eye because I had direct experience with issues of deadly force as a state legislator in 2009. A constituent of mine approached me because she had lost a teenage son in a 2007 Waldoboro police shooting and wanted to tell her story. Steven Rowe, the attorney general at the time, had recently ruled that the law enforcement officer in that case was justified in using deadly force.

It was the 75th such case reviewed by the attorney general's office over the years, and 100 percent had been ruled justifiable — a streak that continues to this day.

While we appreciate how dangerous a police officer's life can be, there is reasonable doubt in the public's eye that every one of those cases has been justifiable. That is because the attorney general's review process is greatly misunderstood by the public.