

Karenina Cooper
NEWPORT
LD 206

Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, and other members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee, my name is Karenina Cooper and I live in Newport and I retired from RSU 2 as a classroom teacher . I am here to testify neither for nor against the Governor's proposal for a one-time, 1% cost of living adjustment for all current MainePERS retirees.

I wanted to share my personal story of how I am struggling to keep pace with the rate of inflation on a retired teacher's pension. This school year is my first as a retired teacher and it is not going as I had hoped. My husband and I decided to add him to my health insurance since it is such a good health plan. We had budgeted for that. However as our economy has progressed we are having a tough time making ends meet. Our fuel budget went from \$215.00 a month last year to \$525.00 a month, we have seen a \$20.00 a month increase in our electricity budget. Our food bill has increased by a third and we can no longer enjoy eating out once a week. Now, as I approach my 64th birthday I find myself looking for a job just to be able to pay my bills.

I really appreciated the Governor's one-time ad hoc cost of living however I feel strongly that while it gave some relief this year I am already worried about next year and it is still January!

Thank you for letting me voice my concerns.