

Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, members of the Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs, and Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Amelia Lyons. I am writing as a private citizen and on my own time in support of support of LD 258, An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2023, June 30, 2024 and June 30, 2025.

I have the distinct honor and privilege of working for the Maine Department of Education, formally as a state employee since 2018 and as a contractor since 2013. The work that this department does is truly vital and some of the most important work in our state. My colleagues are dedicated leaders in the profession, and move mountains every day to do what's best for Maine's children. I am regularly in awe of the strength, compassion, and tenacity of my colleagues, as they support the critical infrastructure of public education in our state.

This is why I write to you to say, I am devastated by how many of my skilled colleagues have left state government service in the past few years. We are experiencing a significant brain drain from the department, because at the end of the day, the wages do not compare. Colleagues have reluctantly left their dream jobs at the state, for other positions that pay 50% more and have a school year schedule. Folks who have years of historical knowledge and context for the department - something that is few and far between, and so crucial - are realizing it's not worth it to continue working at these salary levels given their expertise.

When someone puts in their notice at the department, it can take many months to refill that position. Many months of others taking on their workload, hours of reviewing applications, preparing, conducting, and evaluating interviews. Our work and our morale suffer when we face long gaps without essential staff in our department. This means time taken away from our important duties supporting Maine schools and students. If the State of Maine could close the well-documented wage gap, I know there are many who would choose to stay - because this work is so fulfilling, and it is a privilege to be a public servant. But if we're asked to do these complex, difficult jobs without adequate pay or support, we cannot blame our colleagues when they find a better offer.

I sincerely appreciate your attention to this matter and am available if you have any questions.

Amelia Lyons  
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