

## **Testimony in support of Retiree COLA 02/10/2023**

Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs and members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee, Senator Tipping and members of the Labor and Housing Committee. My name is Ginette Rivard and I live in Caribou. I retired 7 years ago, after nearly 25 years in the Children's Behavioral Health unit at DHHS. However, I was on Leave of Absence while serving as full time President of MSEA during my last four years of service. I continue to be active with the MSEA Retiree program.

AS you have heard from others, the COLA for MainePERS participants was artificially capped at 3% in 2011. This allowed the administration of that time to balance the budget, in order to increase spending in other areas. To put it bluntly, that budget was balanced on the backs of the very people who kept the state running and have continued to do so.

As you know a COLA, or Cost-of-Living Adjustment, is defined as "an increase made to counteract the effects of rising prices in the economy". Granted, since 2011, the COLA has been below the 3% cap a number of times. However, the COLA has been in excess of 3% at least twice we have had to come before this committee, hat in hand, begging for an Ad Hoc COLA. And we appreciate your willingness to hear us.

We ask that you raise the cap for future years so that current and future retirees have the assurance that the retirement benefits we all worked hard to secure will keep up with inflation. This action will help address the inequity that was created by the 2011 cuts to current and future retirees. As always, I thank you for your time and consideration.