

Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs,  
Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder and  
members of the Committee on  
Appropriations and Financial Affairs and  
Committee on Labor and Housing.

I am Penny Whitney-Asdourian from  
Scarborough. I am retired, having worked for  
the Maine Judicial Branch for over 33 years.  
My husband and I both currently receive a  
MainePERS pension and I am here to request  
this committee recommend the funding of a  
full cost of living adjustment (COLA) for our  
retirees.

Regarding the COLA, as you know, state  
retirees are not eligible for a full COLA based  
on CPI, but the COLA is capped at 3%.  
Additionally, the COLA is not calculated on  
your full pension, but the 2011 budget cuts  
impacting the pensions put a cap on that as  
well, making it impossible for retirees to ever  
keep up with the cost of living.

While I certainly appreciate the budget that Governor Mills put forward, containing a “one-time” increase for our retirees, one-time fixes simply are not enough and fail to increase the base on which the next COLA can be calculated. This results in our retirees falling further and further behind. I am asking that you fund a full cumulative COLA in the biennial budget.

I am part of an organization that has allowed me frequent contact with our state retirees over the past few years. It is greatly concerning to me that there has been very little focus on the financial insecurities of retirees and the elderly in this state. Every day when you venture out you will encounter older Mainers who are still working. While some are doing it simply to stay busy, a conversation will reveal that they are very dependent on the additional income to heat their homes, pay for their medications, and food.

I am asking that you take a small step in paying forward all that state retirees gave to assure quality services to the people of Maine. Please understand fully funding the COLA, and making it cumulative will not address the devastation that the 2011 cuts created, but it will go a long way in making sure our retirees feel that this Legislative body appreciates the commitment and dedication that were given during their careers with the state.

Every year we wonder if this will be the time when the Legislature recognizes the value of the contributions, and in many instances, the sacrifices, we made during our careers and tries to do right by us. In my mind, THIS is the time, THIS is the year.

I thank you for the job you are doing on behalf of all of us and for taking the time to listen to me. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you.