

Dear Maine Legislators I am writing this on my own time not work time to inform you of the urgent need to increase funding to the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife.

In the last 3 years at the Dry Mills State Fish Hatchery in Gray Maine we have had significant turn over and were short handed for an extended period of time.

The Most difficult aspect of this is training employees just to have them leave for better pay elsewhere! Retention is at an all time low and recruitment is very difficult at this time. I realize this is an issue all across Maine both private and public however it is especially difficult when you are dealing with raising and stocking live fish for the public.

Prime examples of us losing good people is Jamie Brey and Greg Bell two supervisors. Jamie left to work for DOT and Greg is just leaving because he is tired of fighting with the state for more pay for him and his employees. I personally would leave also however I am only two and a half years away from retirement after having worked for Inland Fisheries and Wildlife for almost 35 years now.

During the Pandemic a couple years ago out of four employees here at the Dry Mills Hatchery only 2 remained for almost two Months myself and my supervisor Greg Bell that's just too hard on workers over 50 years old.

I feel the only way to retain our work force is to close the pay gap between state employees and other states pay along with private sector. Thank you to all Legislators for listening to my testimony.

Sincerely yours

Mike Andrews