

Mark Brunton
South China
LD 1854

RE: LD1854 An Act to Complete and Implement the Comprehensive Review of the Classification and Compensation System for Executive Branch Employees

Dear Legislators,

I am writing in support of LD1854. I am an employee of the Department of Health and Human Services Office of Aging and Disability Services (OADS). I have served the people of the State of Maine since May 2014 as a Caseworker, Resource Coordinator and Comprehensive Health Planner.

The work we do at OADS is essential to the health and well-being of Maine families and their loved ones. We support and enhance services to assist aging Mainers, and individuals with physical and intellectual disabilities to live, work and thrive in their communities. We also regulate and support nursing homes and other long-term care facilities to serve those Mainers who can no longer maintain health and safety independently. Many of my coworkers in Adult Protective Services investigate threats to the safety and health of the aging and disabled population. An APS caseworker is a lifeline to vulnerable Mainers to protect them from emotional, physical and financial abuse.

Like many other State of Maine agencies, OADS is experiencing a severe labor shortage with many vacancies in vital positions. Employers throughout Maine and the nation are currently experiencing similar challenges; however, the current level of understaffed and understaffed positions in our state government is reaching the critical stage. The effects of lost productivity and the impact upon the people of Maine are becoming severe. The factors contributing to this crisis are not new and did not solely arise as a result of the COVID pandemic or current economic conditions. For more than a decade, state employees have been undercompensated in relation to our private sector counterparts. Cuts in our benefits and increases in our payroll contributions to retirement and healthcare have eroded the value of the overall compensation package. As you are aware, recent compensation studies have proven this to be so.

In addition to the erosion of compensation as compared to equivalent professions in the private sector, the classifications of state positions are outdated and obsolete. The classification system dates back to the 1970s with very few modifications or improvements. The Committee and the Legislature must consider the magnitude of the significant changes to the workforce and in the workplace in the ensuing 50 years.

State government is in serious need of modernization. LD1854 will begin the process of that modernization. The actions of this Legislature will determine the effectiveness of the delivery of government services to the people, businesses and organizations of Maine for the next 50 years. Enacting LD1854 will ensure those services are delivered by Maine workers who can support their families and contribute to the Maine economy and their communities in a sustainable way, for the future of Maine. I urge you to pass LD1854.

Sincerely,

Mark A. Brunton
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