

Alexis Perry
Winthrop, ME
LD1854

Testimony in Favor of LD1854, "An Act to Complete and Implement the Comprehensive Review of the Classification and Compensation System for Executive Branch Employees"

Senator Nangle, Representative Stover, and members of the Committee on State and Local Government, my name is Alexis Perry. I reside in Winthrop, ME and am employed by the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention. I have been a state employee for nearly two years and in this time have felt and seen the impact of the outdated and severely underpaying classification and compensation system.

In the last two years, my team at MCDC has been working to hire several positions to adequately staff our program. These additions of staff would allow us to really excel at the work we do rather than only accomplish the vital items. However, we've hit numerous roadblocks with hiring and it always comes back to the compensation. We work to employ talented, educated, and prepared employees as designated in the minimum criteria for each position, however, we don't offer nearly enough pay to make accepting the positions worthwhile for many people. Many applicants have obtained their Masters Degree but wouldn't bring in enough income to live and pay their student loans, so they turn down the offer. Community level positions we fund often offer higher compensation than the state-level positions. As such, we've had to post multiple positions repeatedly- some 3-5 times. The hiring process takes time and ultimately money to continue to pre-screen applicants, conduct interviews, and offer positions to have them declined because of pay. Additionally, these positions would take workloads off staff who are juggling entirely too much to keep programs afloat. The pandemic contributed to significant burnout, especially in the public health field, and it only continues as we're unable to staff appropriately.

I didn't enter the public health field, nor state service, thinking I'd be making large sums of money- I did it to make an impact around issues I'm passionate about, and I have to believe that's true for a lot of my peers. That being said, impact and service don't help pay bills and with the undeniable cost of living increases, we need to be compensated appropriately. My job classification no longer matches the work my role has evolved to and I know this is true for several on my team. Our annual step increases currently are matched by the rise in healthcare premiums rather than adding to people's paychecks. It keeps being said that state employees are invaluable and critical, and proper compensation (roughly an additional 15%) to bring us to a more fair, comparable pay, is the way to make things right before we lose dedicated and talented individuals.

All this being said, I urge you to please pass LD 1854.

Thank you for the consideration.