



MAINE AFL-CIO

A Union of Unions Standing for Maine Workers

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Testimony of Maine AFL-CIO Legislative & Political Director, Adam Goode, in Opposition to “Language Part “R” Increases the budgeted attrition rate for the 2026-2027 biennium from 1.6% to 5% for judicial branch and executive branch departments and agencies” in LD 210, An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2025, June 30, 2026 and June 30, 2027

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, members of the Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs, my name is Adam Goode. I’m the Legislative and Political Director of the Maine AFL-CIO. We represent 40,000 working people in the state of Maine. We work to improve the lives and working conditions of our members and all working people. We are providing testimony in opposition to *Language Part “R” Increases the budgeted attrition rate for the 2026-2027 biennium from 1.6% to 5% for judicial branch and executive branch departments and agencies* in the proposed biennial budget (LD 210).

We see no need for public sector workers to struggle with short staffing and a compensation and classification system that does not keep up with the work that people do for the state given that for the last three decades, the net worth of the wealthiest 1% of Americans grew by \$21 trillion, while that of the bottom 50% dropped by \$900 billion. The bottom 50% of American households owns just 2% of the nation’s wealth.^{1,2}

The increase in the state worker attrition rate will exacerbate the staffing problems in state government and reduce the quality of state services. Changing the attrition rate from 1.6% to 5% is essentially a raid on the personnel services in state government, which will only make it harder to improve wages, working conditions and staffing. An abysmal 1 in 6 positions in state government remain vacant. There is a crisis in staffing in state government now, and this change moves money from staffing to fill other budget gaps.

Our testimony on this portion of the budget reinforces the concerns you will hear from MSEA-SEIU Local 1989 on the Governor’s proposal to remove nearly \$44 million from the State’s personnel budget and transfer that amount into the General Fund, where it would be used for other purposes.

The administration proposes to more than triple the state employee attrition rate, from 1.6% to 5%, in both the Executive and Judicial branches of Maine State Government in order to justify this proposed financial maneuver. Vacant positions throughout all departments of state government remain a serious problem and hardship on both state workers and state services. You will undoubtedly hear testimony both on this section of the budget and on many other issues this session about the struggle that state workers face daily as they deliver services.

Printed In House with Union Labor

¹<https://www.peoplespolicyproject.org/2019/06/14/top-1-up-21-trillion-bottom-50-down-900-billion/>

²<https://www.peoplespolicyproject.org/2023/10/23/wealth-distribution-in-2022/>

We increasingly hear from union workers who are impacted by the compensation and classification issues faced in state government. Firefighters and first responders have provided detailed testimony outlining how addressing compensation and classification issues would help Maine's regional communication centers by addressing the issues of chronic understaffing and helping enable quicker and more efficient responses to emergency situations. With more staff on hand to answer calls, dispatch emergency services can coordinate response efforts and communication centers can help reduce response times and improve overall emergency response services.

Working class people who count on the ferries to run on time, the professionals at Child Development Services to help navigate complicated child services and a host of other services from state government will have better lives and working conditions when state employees are compensated for the work they do based on their knowledge, skills, abilities, and the level of responsibility they have in performing important services in our communities.

The money in the State's Salary Plan is there to fund budgeted positions and to close the state employee pay gap. It shouldn't be used as a piggybank to fund other priorities. Reducing the amount of money that ultimately ends up in the Salary Plan will make it more difficult to implement a new compensation and classification system for Executive Branch workers and we ask that you take this section out of the proposed budget.