

Testimony of Beth White
Maine Service Employees Association, SEIU Local 1989
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs
and the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety,
1pm Tuesday, February 4, 2025, State House Room 228 and Electronically

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, (Emergency) (Governor's Bill),
Sponsored by Representative Drew Gattine

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine and members of the Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs, Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, and members of the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety, I'm Beth White, director of politics and legislation for the Maine Service Employees Association, Local 1989 of the Service Employees International Union. We are a labor union representing over 13,000 Maine workers, including many of the workers at the Department of Corrections, the Department of Public Safety, and the Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management.

First, we support the numerous reclassifications, reorganizations, and range changes within DOC, DPS, and DVEM, some of which fall outside of MSEA bargaining units. We're also encouraged to see initiatives to address understaffing through the creation of new positions and the continuation of limited period positions. Understaffing has been an ongoing concern across state government for many years, impacting both the workers providing critical services and the Mainers who rely on these services.

We are pleased to see increased funding for Long Creek Youth Development Center (LCYDC) included in the proposed budget for the Department of Corrections. Understaffing at Long Creek has been an ongoing concern and has had an impact not only on the workers themselves, but on the residents as well. It is vitally important that Long Creek has the staffing necessary to not only keep youth safe, but also to ensure they receive the educational, rehabilitative, and social services they are entitled to and deserve. Ensuring the facility is fully staffed and adequately funded is essential.

We also support the proposed range change for 9 Computer Forensic Analyst positions within the Department of Public Safety, Computer Crimes Unit. These workers are tasked with one of the most crucial, challenging, and traumatizing jobs within state government, and they deserve to be compensated fairly for that work. We appreciate that the 131st Legislature, including many of you, fought to ensure that workers at the Computer Crimes Unit and Crime Lab are eligible for the same retirement plan as their sworn officer counterparts. Thank you. This range change is another important step in showing these workers the appreciation they deserve.

However, we are extremely concerned about the Governor's proposal (Part R) 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,

to justify this proposed financial maneuver. Understaffing throughout all departments of state government remains a serious problem often with devastating consequences on both state workers and Maine people who rely on their services. The State's own studies show that state workers remain substantially underpaid compared to their public and private sector counterparts throughout Maine and New England. [Please see the related memo](#) that we presented to this committee on Oct. 8, 2024, detailing our response to the State's Market Pay Report dated Sept. 30, 2024.

The money in the State's Salary Plan is there to fund budgeted positions and to close the state employee pay gap, and it shouldn't be used as a piggybank to fund other priorities. We'd like to respectfully remind you that Part PPP of the Supplemental Budget passed by the Legislature and signed into law on April 22, 2024, expressly authorizes the administration to use all funds in the State's Salary Plan to negotiate with us over the implementation of a new compensation and classification system for Executive Branch workers—and those negotiations are ongoing. The administration's proposal to transfer nearly \$44 million from the State's personnel budget into the General Fund appears to be an attempt to end run Part PPP. We ask that you reject this change and ensure these resources are used to address these serious recruitment and retention issues.

Thank you and I would be glad to answer any questions.