

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee. Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, members of the Health and Human Services Committee. My name is Joshua Abraham, I am a Treatment Team Coordinator at Riverview Psychiatric Center, and steward for MSEA Local 1989. I am here to request that you work to defend and expand resources for state employee wages.

I am taking away time from my four daughters and my family to express the concerns we are facing at Riverview because I believe we need to be heard. Like many others have and will mention, we serve a vulnerable community needs our help. To do this job, like any other job we need the right tools to best help these people. I have witnessed short staffing on several occasions. As a coordinator or a Mental Health Worker IV, we are in direct contact with patients for our full shift, but unlike others we are not receiving direct care pay (2-dollar hourly stipend). There are four of us that work for the hospital. Our wages are not where they need to be for this work where there are regular workplace injuries, and the unattractive pay rates have contributed to our staffing challenges. On top of that, wages have not been keeping pace with increasing cost-of-living rates here in Maine.

With inadequate staffing, I am regularly asked to go hands on with, and subdue very dangerous patients. We are asked to put our bodies in harm's way and we are not being compensated to do so. We cannot refuse orders to this dangerous work due to a line on all job descriptions which basically states in layman's terms, that you have to do this, or it will be considered insubordination. Although, even if we did not do this, we should still be paid accordingly because we are always in what is considered a patient care area.

My colleagues and I deserve to be paid appropriately for the work we do. If this budget takes away \$44 million dollars from the personnel services budget as proposed by the Governor, as opposed to adding \$44 million dollars (or more) for the personnel services budget, we will continue to go in the wrong direction in closing the state employee pay gap, and continue to slide back in seeing our job classifications fairly compensated. I ask that you help fix this problem in the 2-year budget to keep me and my dedicated coworkers out of harms way.

Our work is essential in the State of Maine, and I ask that your committees with the entire legislature work with Governor Mills to treat it as such. My biggest gripe is that this always falls on deaf ears. I am in hopes that some light will be brought to this issue, and that you are willing to help the people you are sworn to serve.

Thank you.