

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs committee. Senator Bailey, Representative Mathieson, members of the Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services. My name is Cynthia Barre. As a Maine citizen I am personally providing my written testimony to address concerns of State employment in LD210. We need the Legislature to protect Maine's Executive Branch personnel services budget by rejecting Part R of the Governor's proposed budget, and work to expand funding to address staffing issues in State Government Thank you for taking the time to listen and to consider our concerns regarding our working conditions.

I started employment with the State of Maine in 2012 after working half of my career in the private sector. I started at MaineCare where the pay was low, the building was sickly, and the job was high stress due to working on many emergent issues.

Currently I work at the Maine Bureau of Insurance. The majority of our job descriptions were written in the 1980's, which is when they were assigned a paygrade. These outdated job descriptions and paygrades are common with the majority of the State's positions.

In 2020 MSEA was successful in getting a Pay Scale Study approved by the State. The study has been completed. The data in the study reveals that employees in the private sector who have the same job titles and job duties are making considerably more than their counterpart does at the State of Maine. Since 2019, the state employee pay gap has gone from 15%, to 14%. In 5 years, we have made 1% progress. Since the study, the MSEA has negotiated our contracts and the State has held strong on not adequately addressing the inequity in our pay.

Staff retention, and finding the best qualified candidates for State positions, is an issue due to the paygrade of State positions. While I was at MaineCare, Governor LePage put both a hiring freeze and a pay raise freeze on State positions. Due to these two factors if a position became open a new employee could not be hired to fill the position. By the time I left MaineCare I was doing three jobs for the same low paygrade I was hired at. Although today we no longer have a hiring freeze or pay raise freeze the issue of inequity in our pay and staff retention still persists. It is hard to find high quality candidates when they see the pay they will be offered. This impacts our ability to deliver quality services to the public.

On top of this, I would like to ask the Legislature to address the sick buildings we work in as State employees. Since I have worked for the State I have had multiple lung infections and health issues due to toxic air quality in the buildings I have worked in. I have addressed this issue over and over again since 2012 only to have it fall on deaf ears by the Administration. The majority of the State buildings I have been in (for meetings etc.) have made me and others sick. There are a vast number of State buildings that are in horrible condition and very toxic to employees' health. It would be a significant cost savings to Maine taxpayers to close these old dilapidated buildings.

I hold myself to a high moral standard and I have an excellent work ethic. I ask that my employer respect what I bring to the table with actions that address the concerns of employees. I thought I would be with the State until I retire. I have been seriously reconsidering this due to the issues I have outlined. Employment elsewhere has become an option that I am researching and considering.

Thank you for your time.

Cynthia Barre