

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs committee. Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts, members of the Transportation Committee. My name is Ronald Pelletier. I work as a Transportation Worker for the Department of Transportation in Aroostook County. I am writing this testimony on my own personal time.

I would like to start by saying I love my job at MaineDOT. At the same time, we are very short staffed and the pay isn't great. When I was growing up, I was told that working for the State was a dream job to have. In my opinion, there are two things that keep this from being true today.

One is the lack of incentive to attract new employees and if they stick it out through the hiring process, they soon turn away from the state job and go to a different job because the hiring process is so long that they have no choice but to go elsewhere. The starting wage is not attractive enough to keep people waiting for their first day of work and their first check. Who can blame them when bills need to be paid and families need to be supported?

Another thing is that with the lack of workers, we have to work longer than 15 hours during snow storms to keep the roads clear and keep our community safe. I have personally worked 20 hours before having a break. I have coworkers that have gone a lot longer before having a break.

A lot of towns and municipalities have starting pay around \$25 an hour with benefits for similar work. In the onboarding for Transportation Workers, it says work-life balance and rest is essential. We just don't have the crew numbers for that. I am asking that you and your committees will work to support us, the Department, and the Executive Branch workers budget in LD210.

When I started working for MaineDOT, I was asked by coworkers why I chose DOT for a job because it's such a tough job. I live very close to the DOT Camp I work at. I'm able to come home mostly every night and because of that, I have a better home life which I appreciate. However, the wages that are below market rates that are supported by temporary stipends, give an added challenge.

Please work to protect funding and add resources for us at DOT and Maine's Executive Branch. Our wages deserve to be paid market rates, without the need for recruitment and retention stipends. Please help us get Maine State jobs back to being the dream jobs they used to be. We would all benefit from that with your help.

Thank you for reading my testimony.

Ron Pelletier