

Testimony of Beth White
Maine Service Employees Association, SEIU Local 1989

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation
2pm Tuesday, March 11, 2025, State House Room 126 and Electronically

**LD 274, An Act Making Unified Allocations from the Highway 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**
Sponsored by Representative Lydia Crafts

Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts and members of the Committee on Transportation, 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 workers at the Maine Department of Transportation (DOT).

First, we support the approved range changes, reclassifications, reorganizations, and new positions within the proposed Highway Fund Budget, including those within the Department of the Secretary of State, and the approved range change of 9 Computer Forensic Analyst Positions within the Department of Public Safety, among others.

We appreciate the initiative to continue and make permanent limited-period positions within the Maine State Ferry Service (2 Ferry Ordinary Seaman positions, 3 Ferry Captain Positions, and 1 Ferry Engineer Position. As many of you are aware, the Maine State Ferry Service (MSFS) has experienced many disruptions to service in recent years due to understaffing.¹ Making these positions permanent will help ensure that MSFS has the staffing required to safely operate the ferries that so many Mainers and tourists depend on. However, we are curious about the initiative on page 55 of Part A to allocate \$500,000 from the Highway Fund and \$1 million from the Island Ferry Services Fund in each year of the biennium to "continue a contract for temporary services in order to continue operations of the Maine State Ferry Service".

However, we are extremely concerned about the initiative to eliminate 60 positions within the Department of Transportation throughout this proposed budget. Short staffing is a huge concern within DOT and eliminating much needed positions will only make this understaffing worse. We strongly oppose the elimination of these positions.

This Committee heard from DOT workers during biennial budget testimony about how the pay gap impacts the general fund budget, but it's important to note that it also impacts the highway fund budget due to the fact that many positions within the Department of Transportation are funded through both the Highway Fund and the General Fund. With understaffing continuing to be a concern at DOT and with the state employee pay gap remaining at 14% as of September 2024, which is an improvement of 1% in the last five years, you can see why we are extremely concerned about the Governor's proposal (Part C) to remove approximately \$6 million from the

1. <https://www.pressherald.com/2024/07/04/maine-state-ferry-service-hampered-by-staffing-shortages/>

Highway Fund Personal Services Budget so it can be used for other purposes. The administration proposes to more than triple the state employee attrition rate, from 1.6% to 5% in order to justify this proposed financial maneuver. 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](#)² that we presented to the Appropriations 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 Personal Services lines and the Salary Plan are 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 ask that you reject this change and ensure these resources are used to address the serious recruitment and retention issues within the Departments funded through the Highway Fund Budget.

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

Compensation Comparisons for MaineDOT

The following compensation rates are based on the 2023 American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (ASSHTO) Salary Survey, published September 2024.³ This survey compares DOT worker compensation across states that participated in the survey.

Classifications related to National Average:

Job Classification: Wage as % of National Average, Starting Pay

Staff Accountant: Maine 71%, Starting pay \$41,766

Contract/Grant Specialist: Maine 71%, Starting pay \$45,801

Transportation Landscape Architect: Maine 71%, Starting pay \$54,621

Transportation Training Analyst: Maine 72%, Starting pay \$47,840

Senior Geologist: Maine 72%, Starting pay \$54,621

Policy Dev Spec-Civil Rights Coord: Maine 72%, Starting pay \$57,990

Historic Preservationist Coord: Maine 73%, Starting pay \$54,621

Transportation Engineer II: Maine 74%, Starting pay \$65,083

Assistant Technicians: Maine 78%, Starting pay \$35,714

Senior Planner: Maine 78%, Starting pay \$52,832

Supervisory Prof Land Surveyor: Maine 79%, Starting pay \$61,838

Bridger Operator: Maine 80%, Starting pay \$31,200

Transportation Worker I: Maine 81%, Starting pay \$33,072

Transportation Crew Leader: Maine 83%, Starting pay \$45,760

Transportation Engineer III: Maine 84%, Starting pay \$75,795

Technicians: Maine 86%, Starting pay \$43,493

Transportation Worker III: Maine 87%, Starting pay \$37,378

Right-of-Way Appraiser II: Maine 88%, Starting pay \$50,190

2. <https://mseaseiu.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/10-8-24-MSEA-response-on-State-Market-Pay-Report.pdf>
3. <https://aashtojournal.transportation.org/aashto-issues-latest-transportation-salary-survey/>

Senior Technicians: Maine 88%, Starting pay \$54,621

Transportation Operation Manager: Maine 88%, Starting pay \$55,744

Chief Engineer: Maine 88%, Starting pay \$109,907

Transportation Worker II: Maine 89%, Starting pay \$34,986

1. <https://mainemorningstar.com/2024/07/24/after-ferry-disruptions-maine-island-officials-ask-gov-mills-to-assist-with-staffing-challenges/>