

TESTIMONY OF REBEKAH L KOROSKI
TO THE COMMITTEE ON LABOR
MARCH 26, 2025

Representative Roeder, Senator Tipping and members of the Committee on Labor. My name is Rebekah Koroski and I appreciate you taking the time to hear my position on LD 900 – An Act to Protect State Employee Pensions from Inflation and LD 1040 – An Act to Raise the Cap on Retirement Benefits for Certain State Employees and Teachers to Which A Cost of Living Adjustment is Made.

I am currently a Management Analyst II with the Maine Department of Environmental Protection. I have been a State Employee for slightly over 24.5 years. I apologize that I am unable to testify in person, as I am working on several large projects concurrently that take up a large amount of my time during the normal workday.

One might not expect a current State employee to take the time to testify regarding these 2 bills, even though whatever is decided here, will affect how my retirement benefits are calculated when the time comes.

My motivating factor in testifying in support of these two bills is my mother. She worked for the State for 25 years before retiring. Because she never made much more than \$35,000 per year, she has a rather small monthly pension amount. Really, only the teachers are worse off on what they received for a pension. We all know that until earlier this year, retired State employees and teachers were penalized by Social Security for having a State pension. Even my father's death benefit was reduced by 2/3 because she was being penalized by Social Security. Thank goodness those 2 Federal laws were overturned and now my mother is eligible for her full Social Security benefit and my father's full death benefit. It does not make her wealthy by any means, but it does mean that if she doesn't wish to have a part-time job to supplement her income, she has more of a choice now.

That being said, the price of everything has increased since the pandemic and continues to rise. The cost of bacon & eggs alone both doubled. The State has a responsibility to these retirees to make sure that their retirement amounts keep up with inflation, at a minimum. In 2011, the Legislature cut the maximum cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for this demographic to pay for tax cuts for people who make considerably more than they do. It was a betrayal to the people who had given their lives serving the public and knew they were working for less money at the time to for a stable income in retirement.

The retired State employees and teachers should receive a COLA on their entire base to match inflation to keep up, but I do understand that the cost of funding that in one swoop would be impractical, so I am ok with baby steps until we get there.

I've heard the arguments. This isn't about making anyone rich. The incremental increase in the base amount that the COLA can be applied to and increasing the maximum COLA allowed is the right thing to do for this population so that they can continue to afford to house and feed themselves. Both are necessities.

Thank you again for taking the time to allow me to share my perspective on this matter.