



LOCAL LODGE S-89
P.O. Box 481, Bath, Maine 04530

DISTRICT LODGE 4
INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF MACHINISTS & AEROSPACE WORKERS

Carol L. Sanborn, President
E-mail: csanborn61900@roadrunner.com
Cell: (207) 313-0043

05/05/25 Public Hearing

Testimony of Carol L. Sanborn, President IAMAW Local Lodge S-89

- In support of LD 1265:** *"An Act to Amend the Laws Governing Public Employee Market Pay Studies and Comprehensive Reviews of the Classification Plan for State Service Positions."*
- In support of LD 1744:** *"An Act to Modify Provisions of the State Civil Service System Governing Employee Recruitment and Retention."*
- In support of LD 1539:** *"An Act to Create a State Employee Compensation Stabilization Fund."*

Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury, and other members of the Committee:

I am a resident of Dresden and a paralegal who has for over 40 years helped workers throughout the State. I am President of Machinists' Union (IAMAW) Local S-89; which has eight bargaining units in four counties with members residing in six counties. I am here before you today on my own time because this is important to me personally, to members of my Union, to thousands of State employees, and to all of Maine's residents.

Many times since the classification system for State jobs was created, we have paid for compensation and classification studies that have withered and died without meaningful action having been taken. The data gathered really hasn't been used to resolve any of these issues. This is the reason we are here today still talking about this. We need to ensure that classification and compensation studies are performed, that they be fair and independent, and that the data gathered is actually shared and used to recruit and retain the workers with whom we entrust our most important services. Data gathered and not used for its intended purpose is nothing more than an exercise in wasting resources.

Through my legal work, my Union affiliation, and my personal experience, I have encountered hundreds of Maine State employees in all of our various Departments. The chronic understaffing within State government creates many difficult situations for both employees and for residents seeking services—many of which are required by law such as drivers licenses, professional regulation, etc.. Because State pay rates do not keep up with labor market trends, State government jobs are essentially a training program. People are interested in State jobs only when they can't find employment in the private sector. Accordingly, it is nearly impossible for State government to hire people with experience. Once new hires acquire experience and skills, they leave for private sector jobs that have higher pay and better benefits. This created the cycle in which we have now been stuck for well over a decade.

Last year when I testified on a similar bill, I told this Committee about my conversation with a senior department manager of a State agency. At that time, this person told me:

We have become a jack-of-all trades and a master of none. We keep coming up with short-term resolutions that burn out employees by requiring them to jump from fire to fire, and then they leave State government. We are having to pull people away from other work to keep different areas operational because we lack employees due to our low pay scale. Due to this shuffling, other programs suffer. It is a domino effect. There is also a lack of younger employees to provide continuity of operations. In the next several years as more people retire, the knowledge necessary to provide services will be lost and more inefficiencies will be experienced, thus increasing the cost of government and reducing the speed of services.

Although statistics might show that the State wage system has made minute progress, State wages have not in any way kept up with regional labor market trends and continue to be non-competitive. The general situation is actually worse than it was even just last year. Not only is it still difficult to retain new recruits, now many jobs are simply remaining open for a year or more due to lack of qualified applicants. Note this important distinction: **Maine itself does not lack qualified people. State government lacks qualified applicants.** This leads to increased hiring of outside contractors who are paid more than the State jobs offer permanent employees. There is no cost savings. The Department of Transportation has had to switch to four 10-hour days in an attempt to retain the people it has currently, many of whom have taken second jobs during their three days "off." This means that if an infrastructure event occurs on a Friday/Saturday/Sunday, many workers are not available to come in because they are on the clock at their other jobs. State government jobs should be good enough for people to afford to work a single job, but they are not. However, they used to be.

In my work I communicate with State employees multiple times every day. I have many clients who are State employees. All of my clients rely upon the assistance of State employees. Many IAMAW members are municipal workers who interact daily with various State agencies in their normal course of doing business. Although I work for a private sector firm, I could not do my job without the workers who staff the Workers' Compensation Board, the Bureau of Insurance, the Department of Labor, and the Department of Public Safety. We all rely upon State employees every single day. Without them, our "Departments" would be nothing more than empty infrastructure.

Like many other Maine residents, in my personal life I am dependent upon many State employees for guidance and assistance. I will offer several examples:

My son has Down Syndrome. When he was born, our family found itself engaging with a system with which we had no experience. It was overwhelming and confusing. However, we discovered that within it was an amazing network of professionals who could find the answer to any question and suggest a course of action for any difficult situation. I will always be grateful for the wonderful professionals with Child Development Services who (under the supervision of the Maine Department of Health and Human Services and Department of Education), helped us navigate this journey. Even though my son is currently 23, we are still trying to learn and understand the intricacies of the adult services system so that he may continue to be employed and live a full life as independently as possible. To participate in these programs successfully, there are a myriad of forms and deadlines to which we must adhere. If we have a deadline and a question, we must be able to call in and get a timely, accurate response. When we submit required documentation, it is important that the people staffing these programs have manageable caseloads and the knowledge and training necessary to process the documents. In order to maintain continuity, we must be able to keep people in these positions, and to do that, we have to pay them what they are worth.

My elderly stepfather has Alzheimer's Disease and has for many years. My mother took care of him for 15-20 years until his condition worsened to the point where it was impossible for him to live safely at home. Her own health failed after so many years of putting herself second. She spent their savings paying for his facility costs. After her recent death, and with their savings exhausted, we've had to apply for MaineCare on his behalf and are still attempting to navigate the complex processes and hurdles involved. Without the patient and caring assistance of our DHHS workers, I honestly do not know how we would manage this. Yet, these dedicated people continue to be underpaid. The ones who have the most experience have to train the ever-revolving staff and do not have enough time or assistance to do their own jobs. This is demoralizing and results in emotional burnout, longer wait times, and lower quality service to Maine residents. We need these workers desperately, but the working conditions are not sustainable.

Another State service where I've personally witnessed the negative impact of staffing shortages is that of the Maine State Ferry System. My family regularly travels to and from Vinalhaven. When there is a crew shortage on any ferry to any of the islands, they have to cancel that trip. This results in last-minute notification of cancellations and makes the service completely unreliable. Island residents who have important medical appointments often are required get to the mainland a day early to ensure they don't miss their treatment or specialist visit. This means that during a period where they are already disadvantaged by injury or disease residents—if they are lucky enough to get off the island in time to receive care—often incur the additional expenses of hotel stays and restaurant meals while they wait for the next return ferry to be staffed. Visitors to the islands often are not able to return home as planned. I have witnessed many people who for these reasons missed flights and/or who after leaving their rental, couldn't leave the island, yet also couldn't obtain lodging because it was all taken. People having the qualifications to operate these boats and staff these offices are paid significantly more in the private sector, and the Department of Transportation does not offer what it would take to recruit and retain staff long-term. Much has been spent on hiring temporary staff at rates much higher than what regular dedicated permanent workers are paid. Again, this is demoralizing to those most dedicated and it is not a sustainable practice. A once-reliable public service has been reduced to the transportation equivalent of a casino game—maybe you'll get lucky, but you shouldn't count on it. It wasn't like this years ago when the pay gap between State and private sector jobs was less than it is now.

Maine State government is a training ground for the private sector. Our tax dollars continue to be spent on training private sector employees and are thus providing a direct subsidy to Business interests. If that's what we want to do, we should at least be honest enough to label it officially as a "Subsidy to Enhance and Support Business Interests" and put the cost in the correct column of the ledger.

If passed, the positive effects of these bills will not be limited to a particular geographic area. These bills do not give to one group and take away from another. They benefit all Maine people regardless of geography, political affiliation, race, religion, culture, gender, or age. These bills present you with a unique opportunity to improve the lives of thousands of people throughout our entire State (including your own) by keeping the promise that was made years ago Maine's State government employees. Residents are counting on you to address this problem in a way which will encourage recruitment and **retention** of qualified individuals, and allow these workers to provide services to our residents in an efficient and adequate manner. We cannot continue to bleed out institutional knowledge and expect State government to function effectively. I encourage you to invest in Maine's future and vote "ought to pass" on LDs 1265, 1744, and 1539.