

Good morning, Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, members of the Appropriations Committee, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and members of the Health and Human Services Committee.

My name is Vicki Graves Boudreau. I am here on my own personal time to speak in support of funding LD 579, *An Act to Include Certain Mental Health Workers Under the 1998 Special Plan for Retirement*, as part of the Governor's proposed supplemental budget, LD 2212.

I am asking for your support to include the remaining workers who were excluded from this retirement plan in the last biennial budget. This would make it equitable for those of us at DDPC to be eligible for retirement at age 55 with 25 years of service.

In June of 2026, I will celebrate my 30th anniversary working at Dorothea Dix Psychiatric Center as a registered nurse. I am 54 years old. I began in 1996 as a night shift nurse and have served as a staff nurse, supervisor, and now as a clinical nurse manager.

Over those 30 years, I have been physically assaulted, experienced sexual aggression and violent outbursts, and witnessed coworkers strangled and beaten. Unlike jails and prisons, where inmates are managed by corrections or law enforcement officers, we work side by side with the same population — only we call them patients. Many have committed murder, sexual assault, crimes against children, and arson. We treat them with dignity and respect. We carry no weapons. We have no pepper spray. We do not have locked cells to retreat behind. We immerse ourselves in their trauma and carry the weight of their personal suffering alongside them.

Caregiver burnout, PTSD, compassion fatigue, and vicarious traumatization are as real for us as they are for firefighters, state troopers, corrections officers, and veterans. Early retirement would not only recognize the toll this work takes — it would strengthen recruitment and retention by attracting young, healthy, compassionate nurses to care for Maine's most vulnerable citizens.

As we age, the risk of serious injury increases — and the impact extends beyond us to our families. My husband worries because he knows I care for individuals who have committed murder, sexual assault, pedophilia, and arson — often while acutely ill and untreated. He sees me flinch at loud noises. He has seen the bruises and bite marks. He sees the stress I carry home.

I have loved my career and the patients we serve. But there comes a time when this responsibility should be passed to the next generation. I believe I have earned the right to retire with my full pension while I am still physically and mentally healthy enough to enjoy it.

Please use this budget surplus to ensure that I — and all workers who provide direct care in these facilities — are included in the 1998 Special Plan for Retirement, so we have the same retirement security as the colleagues we work beside every day.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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MSEA
LD 2212

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