

Jessica Caron
Portland
LD 2212

10:00 AM Friday, February 20, 2026, Education and Cultural Affairs^[SEP]

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee. Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee. I'm Jess Caron, and I am writing to speak about chronic staffing issues and the employee pay gap for Maine's Executive Branch workers, and why I am asking your committees to ensure the money taken away from our salary plan needs to be restored, so the Mills administration can afford adequate and overdue investments in the State Employee workforce in LD 2212.^[SEP]

Thank you for taking the time to listen to our stories as state employees. I absolutely love working for the Maine Department of Education and find pride in helping all students and teachers in Maine. Unfortunately, we have had major recruitment issues for teaching, secretary, and other positions at the department due to low salaries. Seeing these critical roles posted over and over again is putting more strain on our workers. Public service employees can only limp along for so long without proper staffing levels, this problem is preventable, and this problem can hinder the quality of the services we provide. I've often tried to recruit peers in other industries to government work, however, when they look at the salaries, they would have to take a large pay cut – and that means applying is not an option for them.^[SEP]

I am writing to urge you all to take a stand to address decades of underpaying state employees. Now is the time to use the \$250 million of surplus funding to address this dire issue. Please return the \$56 million of funds set aside for these essential salary increases to the Executive Branch salary plan. Please continue to fund workers in the Executive Branch, especially the Maine State Library, Community Colleges, Maine Maritime, CDS, the Department of Education, and other branches within the executive branch. The workers are united on this need, so please take the time to hear our concerns! Thanks for listening to our thoughts and I appreciate your leadership in the public sector as well.

^[SEP]I want to end by also sharing my support for Mills' most recent proposal to secure a \$50,000 minimum salary for workers and want to advocate to ensure that teachers and staff members at the DOE, teachers in the unorganized territories, and at Child Development Services are included in this proposal, as this would go a long way with their recruitment issues and provide them with fair wages. Personally, I know many teacher friends who have moved out of state and would love to come back but do not due to salaries. I would love to see these talented teachers back in Maine!^[SEP]

Thanks,
Jessica Caron

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Manager