

Jessica Caron
Portland
LD 2212

4:00 PM Tuesday, February 24, 2026. State and Local Government

Committee [SEP:SEP] Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee. Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury, members of the State and Local Government Committee. I'm Jess Caron, and I am here on my own time 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 investments in the State Employee workforce in LD 2212.

I am writing to urge you 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. Low pay has led to an issue of severe turnover that has caused severe disruptions to our schools, especially rural schools with minimal staffing. In my five years at the Maine Department of Education, I have worked with 4 different accountants in the General Government Service Center, each who have all moved on for higher paying positions. The learning curve is steep in these technical roles and the constant transition means our more strain on our workers and the public service itself limping along slowly with a decrease in quality.

I've often tried to recruit successful peers in other industries to government work, however, when they look at the salaries, the 30k pay cuts make applying not a realistic option for them. Please help the workers of Maine and show your support through your actions. Please return the 56 million of funds set aside for these essential salary increases to the Executive Branch salary plan. We deserve a fair contract, we deserve competitive wages, and we deserve to be invested in to ensure we are full staffed. If this legislature does not take action, our wages will fall behind the cost of living again. With your leadership and choice to take action on this request, you will show true support for the state workers that all Mainers rely on. The workers are united on this need, so please take the time to hear our concerns! Thanks for listening and I appreciate your leadership in the public sector as well.