

Neither for, Nor against LD 2212

Paul Caruso

February 24th, 2026

Testimony

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee, my name is Paul Caruso. I am here, on my own time, to speak about chronic staffing issues and the state employee pay gap for Maine's executive branch workers, in regards to LD 2212. Please dedicate the budget surplus to executive branch worker's salary plan in LD 2212.

As a Computer Programmer for the Department of Administrative and Financial Services, I see and experience the impacts of under staffing & the state employee pay gap. I believe that this budget surplus can address these issues and help ensure that the state can properly provide high-quality healthcare under its MaineCare program.

Prior to my position with the state, I was a grateful recipient of MaineCare's services. I am proud to now work for the state, but wish for the program to be in a better position. I would love to see a MaineCare program adequately staffed and compensated so that Mainers can rely on this healthcare when needed. These committees can work to better support improvements to MaineCare services by restoring the \$56 million that was taken out of the state employee salary in the most recent biennial budget. This current surplus offers a pathway to make right by state workers and public we serve.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistic's Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics for Portland & South Portland as of May 2024, a Computer Programmer makes an annual median wage of \$119,240. Living in Portland with the same job title, I am compensated at about half of that and do not find this to be fair nor attractive to talent. I occasionally spend my weekends working at my part-time job, as an on-call parking garage attendant for the City of Portland, to help afford my living costs. I am passionate about what I do for people. However, it would be very easy for me to accept an offer to take my labor elsewhere.

Good talent could be recruited and retained for the MaineCare program by investing in executive branch workers. Using this surplus to help close the state employee pay gap is in the best interest of the program and our neighbors who rely on it.

As you will likely hear testimony of today, the MaineCare program is not the only critical service provided by passionate, but under staffed and under paid, executive branch workers. Continuing to ignore these issues by failing to incorporate the budget surplus into the State Employee personnel services budget will harm executive branch workers, damage the services they provide, and would be a failure to the Mainers who rely on these critical workers & services.

Please support dedicating the budget surplus to executive branch worker's salary plan in LD 2212. I believe this will address chronic staffing issues and the state employee pay gap. I think investing in this route is an investment in state workers & Mainers alike.

Thank you,
Paul Caruso

Paul Caruso
Portland, ME (representing self)
LD 2212

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