

Good Afternoon, Senator Michael Tipping and Representative Amy Roeber
and Members of the Committee on Labor and Housing

Thank you for holding this public hearing on our Governor's Supplemental Budget Proposal, as it pertains to the C.O.L.A. cap on a Retiree's pension.

My name is John Whitten, and I am a retired public school teacher now living in Oakland, Maine.


Years ago, I harkened to then Governor Reed's 'call' for teachers needed in such specialized areas as: Industrial Arts, Art and Music.
I answered that 'call' and taught music for more than 40 years.

I taught most of my career in impoverished Washington County.
My salary was lower than teachers in other parts of Maine, and thus my Retirement Pension is lower and it is difficult to make ends meet in our household.
(Our three most recent Dead River heating fuel deliveries for these past three months have averaged \$450.00 each and next month, we must cope with higher electricity costs.)

Unlike some households in our state, during this pandemic, that have received various forms of monthly assistance, we have only received that one \$850.00 check from Governor Mills. It didn't stretch nearly far enough and we need your help!
Retired teachers NEED "inflation assistance". We need a 'true' C.O.L.A. !!!

The issue before us today, is how can you assist retired teachers to MAINTAIN what they have, via an "inflation equalizer" . We need a C.O.L.A. that is reflective of the Consumer Price Index (not reduced) AND we need it on our entire pension.

When I entered teaching this was so... but Governor Baldacci or Governor LePage and our, then legislators, I believe, needed funds else where and supplimnted the State's budget by reducing the amount of pension that a C.O.L.A. could be applied , as well as limiting the Consumer Price Index 's determined percentage necessary for a retiree to "stay even" .



Now, I hope that none of you, would condone rule changes during a Little League game. But that is exactly what our state did to teachers (already 'in the retirement system') ... "They" changed the rules that we were planning on, for our retirement. I would have no disagreement should our state government change the rules for teachers *about to ENTER* the profession, but "they" changed the rules for people "already in the game", and reduced each retiree's household's income.

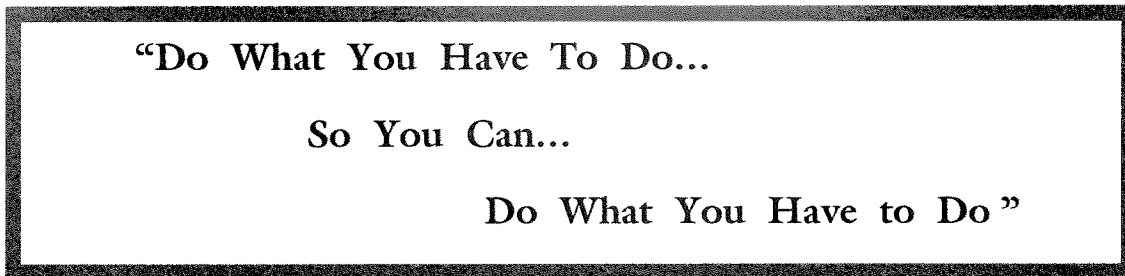
To emphasize my point of less household income, I do not think there is another person here today, that is driving a car older than my 23 year old, 2001 Toyota with 325 thousand miles on it. With this past years price escalations, we can not afford a car payment, too. I need your help!

Recently our local news, had a story about the state's concern over teachers leaving the profession due to Covid-19, or burn-out or for better work. The number was north of 1300 educators. Also, the story listed over 900 teachers retiring (This is alarming as schools are already scrambling to fill classrooms with instructors.)

AND I ask you...

"How can we recommend teaching as a profession, when Maine 'double-kicks' their retirees - - as they have done so since 2011 ??? " How much more money does our state government want from retired teachers on fixed incomes???

As a school teacher, I would display on my wall a sign that read:



I would ask all of you to show your gratitude to the teachers you have had, and who are now retired - - especially with today's inflation running at over 8 percent, and realize that 3 parts of a recognized 8 percent COLA (or even 4 parts) Cost Of Living Adjustment, is just not sufficient for a retired teacher to 'maintain' what they have... so, please, **Do What You Have To Do, So You Can...** (show your gratitude) .

Thank you for your considerations and for listening to me.



A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "John B. Whitten".