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**Testimony of Major General Douglas Farnham, Adjutant General / Commissioner,  
Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management**

**BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS AND  
FINANCIAL AFFAIRS WITH THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON VETERANS  
AND LEGAL AFFAIRS**

**“An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund  
and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain  
Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government  
for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2023, June 30, 2024 and June 30, 2025”**

**March 1, 2023**

Good morning, Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs, Senator Hickman, Representative Supica and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs. My name is Douglas Farnham, and I am the Commissioner of the Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management (DVEM). I am here today to testify in support of the biennial budget bill, LD 258.

This budget advances the Governor's guiding belief that to build a stronger, more prosperous state where opportunity is available to all, then we must invest in the infrastructure that supports the people of Maine, our greatest asset.

That is why this budget proposal strengthens the very things that Maine people rely on every day to succeed, building on the strong success of the currently enacted budget and the last legislative session to tackle Maine's greatest challenges.

We have governed cautiously and in a fiscally prudent way over the past four years, making sure that – even in the hardest of times during the pandemic – we lived within our means. This budget proposal continues that practice.

We look forward to the discussions over the next several months as we outline each initiative and impact of the proposed investments.

The Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management coordinates and administers the discharge of Maine State Government's responsibility for all military, veterans and emergency management activities through the authorization, planning, provision of resources, administration, operation and audit of each. In addition to their Federal mission, our service members are immediately available to respond to the Governor and citizens of Maine in times of crisis. The Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services provides numerous support services to Maine's 108,000 veterans and manages Maine's four Veterans' Memorial Cemeteries across the State. Although not included in my testimony today, the Maine Emergency Management Agency is charged with all disaster mitigation, preparedness, response, recovery and Homeland Security operations within the State of Maine.

I will address our programs in the order listed in the Public Hearing Testimony agenda and will include programs with and without budget initiatives. DVEM's Part A budget can be found on pages A-169 to A-190 with additional language initiatives on pages 35 & 36 of the language portion of the bill. I will begin on page A-170 with our Administration program. The program primarily includes appropriations from the General Fund.

#### **Administration – Defense, Veterans, and Emergency Management 0109**

The Administration program consists of the Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner and staff, who administer all programs of the department. The program funds the Personal Services and All Other which includes travel, insurance, general operations, and technology.

The one initiative in this program reallocates the cost of the department's Financial Officer to 100% General Fund in the Administration program. Currently, federal funding rules limit the use of this position to only allowable activities under the Master Cooperative Agreement. The reallocation is necessary to support DVEM's internal control, audit, and financial management programs. Currently our department does not have centralized oversight or capacity to oversee and manage these activities. This initiative will allow our Financial Officer to coordinate these activities across our bureaus and agencies. This initiative will also be found on page A-183, initiative # 6 which reflects the partial transfer from the Military Training and Operations program.

*The General Fund increases by \$118,919 in FY24 and \$119,808 in FY25.*

Since pages A-171 thru A-175 cover Maine Emergency Management Agency programs, I will now move on to page A-176 for the Maine National Guard Postsecondary Fund.

#### **Maine National Guard Postsecondary Fund Z190**

The Maine National Guard Postsecondary Fund provides funding for a 100% tuition reimbursement at any state postsecondary education institution or partial reimbursement at participating private nonprofit institutions in the state for qualified members of the Maine National Guard. Enrollment and therefore the tuition benefit is exceeding the amount of funding available for this program. The General Fund increases by \$600,000 in FY24 and \$600,000 in FY25.

## **Maine Veterans' Homes Stabilization Fund Z358**

I should note the description of "What the Budget purchases" is incorrect and will be corrected in the Change Package. This is not the Safe Homes Program. This fund was established as a special revenue fund for the purpose of assisting the Maine Veterans' Home Board of Trustees in ensuring the continuous operation of the Maine Veterans' Homes. There are no new initiatives for this program.

I will now proceed to pages A-178 thru A-184 for Military Training and Operations.

## **Military Training and Operations 0108**

*The Military Training and Operations program has 2 components - the Army National Guard and the Air National Guard and each perform dual missions; a state mission as a resource to the State to provide trained and disciplined forces for domestic emergencies or needs such as helping communities deal with floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, snowstorms and most recently the COVID-19 pandemic and a federal mission as a resource to the President for prompt mobilization for war or emergencies in support of our national security. The state budget properly funds the Master Cooperative Agreement between the National Guard Bureau and the State of Maine. It is for sustainment of both Army and Air National Guard facilities (more than 2 million square feet of state guard facilities and more than 365 thousand acres of training land), environmental support, and organizing, training and equipping approximately 3,000 National Guard service members.*

The Maine Army and Air National Guard continues to provide the citizens of Maine with professional, competent, and dedicated service. The requirements on our Guard Soldiers and Airmen, State employees, and State-owned facilities have increased over the years. The funding requests contained in the Military Training and Operations portion of the biennial budget bill have been designed and developed to specifically address the items necessary to support continued services performed by the civilian and military members of the Department.

There are 29 initiatives to adjust the baseline for the program. Out of the 29 initiatives, 3 are funding for services provided by other state agencies, 17 are personnel related, 5 are direct facility funding initiatives and 4 are unique Maine National Guard programs. Although it may jump you around the pages of the budget bill, I am going to address our budget request by grouping. I will start with the 3 other agency service initiatives.

These 3 initiatives provide funding for increases in service and rates related to Human Resources (HR), Financial, and Information Technology support.

The 1<sup>st</sup> initiative on page A-178 will fund the increase in rates for the Security and Employment Service Center which provides HR and financial services.

*The Federal Expenditures Fund will increase \$12,437 in both FY24 and FY25.*

The 4<sup>th</sup> initiative on page A-179 provides funds to reimburse the Office of Information Technology (OIT) for 2 dedicated positions. The positions will serve as the primary administrators of State information systems which operate on the Federal network, as well as the intermediary between OIT and Federal entities such as the Deputy Chief of Staff for Information Management. Currently DVEM is unfunded for these activities.

*The General Fund will increase \$232,715 and \$244,602 in FY24 and FY25 respectively.*

The 4<sup>th</sup> initiative on page A-183 will fund increased OIT rates as well as expand services to additional end-users within the Military Bureau. Many state employees in the Military Bureau do not currently have accounts on or access to the State network. This initiative provides funding to add those accounts as well as funds the increase in OIT rates for current accounts.

*The General Fund will increase \$22,300 in both FY24 and FY25.*

The next group of initiatives include 17 personnel related initiatives; 6 are reorganizations and 1 is a reallocation, and 10 initiatives establish a total of 13 new positions in the Military Bureau. The total fiscal impact to the General Fund is an increase of \$89,387 in FY24 and \$94,627 in FY25 while the Federal Expenditures Fund increases \$995,542 in FY24 and \$1,061,039 in FY25. All state positions in the Military Bureau are federally funded in part or in whole through the Master Cooperative Agreement (MCA) between the State of Maine and the National Guard Bureau. These positions support facility operation, training support and security for the Maine National Guard.

First, I will address the 6 reorganizations initiatives:

#### Page A-179

Initiative #1 is now an approved reorganization of our Superintendent of Buildings to a Public Service Manager III. This will be corrected in the Change Package. This position has grown from the traditional trades and craft-oriented facility management to a position which now manages multiple programs and requires a greater level of institutional knowledge across a wide range of activities. The initiative description should be corrected as this initiative doesn't reallocate funds. It only transfers the position from the General Fund to the Federal Expenditures Fund due to the position being 73% federally funded.

*The General Fund increases \$1,694 in FY24 and \$3,089 in FY25 while the Federal Expenditures Fund increases \$4,579 in FY24 and \$8,341 in FY25.*

Initiative #2 is now an approved reorganization of our Environmental Branch Manager. This will be corrected in the Change Package. The expectation for this position has increased significantly. The position must direct the comprehensive integration and coordination of activities within this branch across the Army National Guard, Regulators, municipalities, Tribal Nations, State HR, Procurement, and Budget to implement the objectives of the Environmental programs.

*The Federal Expenditures Fund increases \$8,938 in FY24 and \$8,935 in FY25.*

Page A-181

Initiative #3 is a proposed reclassification of a Contract Grant Specialist to a Procurement Manager retroactive to October 2020 to accommodate the growth in procurement activities within the Military Bureau.

*The Federal Expenditures Fund increases \$5,242 in FY24 and \$8,394 in FY25.*

Initiative #4 is an approved reclassification of our Business Office Manager. The position has evolved to include management of the full range of bureau financial and administrative functions for an account up to \$39 million per year in state and federal funds. This initiative continues funding for an approved initiative in the FY23 Supplemental Budget.

*The Federal Expenditures Fund increases \$14,851 in FY24 and \$18,992 in FY25.*

Initiative #5 is an approved reorganization of an Inventory & Property Associate II to realign this position from warehouse activities to the Real Property accounting and inventory section. Reallocation to 100% federal funding is authorized per the Master Cooperative Agreement. This initiative continues funding for an approved initiative in the FY23 Supplemental Budget.

*The General Fund decreases \$19,923 in FY24 and \$21,033 in FY25 while the Federal Expenditures Fund increases \$24,384 in FY24 and \$25,734 in FY25.*

Page A-184

Initiative #2 is an approved reorganization to provide much needed support to the Real Property accounting and inventory functions. The department currently has custodial contracts that will absorb the workload once this position is reclassified. This initiative continues funding for an approved initiative in the FY23 Supplemental Budget.

*The Federal Expenditures Fund increases \$8,113 in FY24 and \$10,600 in FY25.*

Let me now address the reallocation.

Page A-183

Initiative #6 addresses the reallocation of Federal Expenditures Funds necessary in the Military Training and Operation program to complete the initiative discussed previously in the Administration Program 0109 found on page A-170.

*The Federal Expenditures Fund decreases \$118,919 in FY24 and \$119,808 in FY25.*

I will now discuss the new positions requests. They begin on page A-179. The Maine National Guard (MENG) is requesting thirteen new positions in the FY24-25 budget. All these positions are supported by the Master Cooperative Agreement between the State

of Maine and the National Guard Bureau (NGB). Based on facility square-footage and training land mass, the National Guard Bureau authorizes the Maine National Guard funding and personnel headcount. The MENG is currently running significantly below the NGB standards. These additional 13 personnel will help close the gap between our authorized and actual personnel strength. The past several years has seen an increase in federal funding provided to the MENG. This has directly led to an increase in the program support requirements such as accounting, procurement, construction, and maintenance activities. These new positions are largely federally funded to account for the increase workload driven by these federal requirements.

Page A-179

Initiative #3 establishes a general service maintenance position to support facilities maintenance at MENG training sites. Growth of the MENG training sites requires additional support for routine maintenance of equipment and building systems. This position will be 100% federally funded.

*The Federal Expenditures Fund increases \$79,987 in FY24 and \$82,929 in FY25.*

Initiative #5 establishes an Accounting Technician to provide direct accounting support to the Maine Air National Guard (MEANG). The MEANG use of state processes has increased significantly. The addition of a new appendix will result in more than 9 large construction contracts which is on top of the 10 recurring annual services contracts and approximately 4 other small construction projects. This position will assist the Senior Staff Accountant who is responsible for State and Federal funds totaling approximately \$6.0M across 4 appendices. This position will be 75/25% federal/state funds.

*The General Fund increases \$19,744 in FY24 and \$20,729 in FY25 while the Federal Expenditures Fund increases \$59,240 in FY24 and \$62,192 in FY25.*

Page A-180

Initiative #1 establishes 2 Accounting Support Specialists to support activities under the MCA for the MENG. Federal general construction budgets have increased two-fold over just the past three years alone, going from 6.5 million in FY19 to 13.4 million for FY22, thereby increasing the number of transactions requiring review, verification, and approval. Additional personnel are necessary to perform the transactions as required by the National Guard Bureau in a timely manner. These positions are 100% federally funded.

*The Federal Expenditures Fund increases \$175,078 in FY24 and \$183,532 in FY25.*

Initiative #2 establishes a Staff Accountant to work with the Accounting Support Specialist in the previously initiative to perform the work necessary under the MCA. Again, these personnel are necessary to accomplish tasks required of the National Guard Bureau. These positions are 100% federally funded.

*The Federal Expenditures Fund increases \$87,539 in FY24 and \$91,766 in FY25.*

Initiative #3 establishes 2 Senior Technicians to act as project inspectors for the federally funded construction projects within the Military Bureau. Positions are necessary to adequately oversee and inspect the work of construction contractors. The complexity of new commercial/military projects has increased in recent years requiring on-site oversight to ensure projects are meeting State and Federal requirements. These positions are 100% federally funded.

*The Federal Expenditures Fund increases \$209,384 in FY24 and \$220,742 in FY25.*

Initiative #4 establishes a Procurement Manager to manage procurement activities in the MENG. By agreement with the Division of General Service and due to the large amount of procurement we conduct, the MENG creates, approves, and manages Master Agreements, service contracts, and construction contracts. The MENG also performs many supplies, equipment and materials purchases related to our facility management program. Currently the Business Manager must manage all procurement personnel directly. The plan is to establish a Purchasing Division within the Business Office. This position is 100% federally funded.

*The Federal Expenditures Fund increases \$99,550 in FY24 and \$104,738 in FY25.*

Initiative #5 establishes 2 Maintenance Mechanics to provide support to the 2.2 million square feet of MENG facilities managed directly by the Military Bureau. The present workload creates an increasing back log due to lack of staff. The level of work is presently offset by contracted service however security constraints frequently require State staff to be present to provide access and oversight resulting inefficiency.

*The General Fund increases \$39,994 in FY24 and \$41,462 in FY25 while the Federal Expenditures Fund increases \$119,980 in FY24 and \$124,396 in FY25.*

Page A-181

Initiative #1 establishes an Office Specialist to perform the administrative tasks associated with the increase in programs in associated staff in the facility management function. This position is 100% federally funded.

*The Federal Expenditures Fund increases \$82,880 in FY24 and \$87,513 in FY25.*

Initiative #2 establishes an Inventory and Property Specialist to assist the Director of Special Projects with real estate, property management and land use agreement administrative tasks freeing up the Director to concentrate on real estate activities associated with construction, acquisition, and land use planning. The position is 100% federally funded.

*The Federal Expenditures Fund increases \$86,833 in FY24 and \$91,659 in FY25.*

Page A-182

Initiative #1 establishes a Senior Staff Accountant to assume the duties of the Financial Officer relative to the Maine Air National Guard Master Cooperative Agreement. To

allow the Financial Officer to concentrate effort on the DVEM's internal control, audit, and financial management programs, it is necessary to establish a position to manage the State's reimbursement process for the cooperative agreement. By funding this position 50/50% federal/state funding, the department will have flexibility to assign tasks from any of the department's bureaus or agencies.

*The General Fund increases \$47,878 in FY24 and \$50,380 in FY25 while the Federal Expenditures Fund increases \$47,883 in FY24 and \$50,384 in FY25.*

This completes the Military Bureau's personnel initiatives. I will move on to our facility funding initiatives. They begin on page A-182.

#### Page A-182

Initiative #2 provides funding for the state match for minor sustainment, repair and maintenance construction contracts. Based on bid results in the past year, we are projecting a need for an increase in funding to accomplish our projected program. The department is projected to receive an additional \$258,000 in federal funding to account for this inflationary impact on construction. At a 50/50 federal/state match, additional state funding is needed, or we are at risk of losing the federal funds.

*The General Fund increases \$258,000 in both FY24 and FY25 while the Federal Expenditures Fund increases the same respectively.*

Initiative #3 provides funding for the projected increase in utility costs across the facilities and training sites in Maine. We are projecting our total annual utility (electric, natural gas, oil, and propane) cost increase to be in excess of \$880,000. Since only 63% of our facilities require a state cost share at 50%, we project we'll need an additional \$275,000 annually to meet our utility needs.

*The General Fund increases \$275,000 in both FY24 and FY25 while the Federal Expenditures Fund increases the same respectively.*

#### Page A-183

Initiative #2 provides funding for maintenance of MENG training sites. With the addition of the Woodville Training site (a total of 5,384 acres), additional supplies and material are necessary to maintain, develop and improve the grounds to facilitate training activities.

*The General Fund increases \$45,000 in both FY24 and FY25.*

Initiative #5 provides funding for design and construction of major improvement, restoration, and modernization of MENG facilities. Since 2015 our department has embarked on an effort to improve and upgrade the working conditions of service members of the MENG. In 2013 the legislature approved, and the citizens passed a \$14 million bond. We exhausted the majority of these funds by 2021 and then received an additional \$6.8 million in funding in the FY22/23 biennium which also has been exhausted. This has been critical to our ability to organize, train and equip the MENG to

perform both its State and Federal mission and we need to continue our effort to bring all facilities up to the standards we expect for our service members. The Maine National Guard (MENG) has 215 buildings with 2,155,738 square feet across the state where they organize, train, and equip their units. The oldest being built in 1933 with an average age of 39 years for all the buildings. This budget will fund projects which will correct of non-compliant code health and life safety deficiencies, replace failing systems to prevent further facility deterioration, update facilities to current standards and authorizations, correct energy inefficiencies, and possible construction of new facilities. The federal government provides significant funding for this purpose, but the state must provide a match. This initiative is an investment in our soldiers and airmen and an investment in the future of our Maine National Guard.

*The General Fund increases \$9,700,000 in FY24 and \$4,600,000 in FY25 while the Federal Expenditures Fund increases \$12,200,000 in FY24 and \$6,000,000 in FY25.*

Page A-184

Initiative #1 provides one-time funding for utilizing MENG members on State Active Duty to perform facility condition and energy efficiency assessments on existing facilities at the Maine Air National Guard. The focus will be on improving existing facilities as well as evaluating the Air Guard facilities against future mission basing criteria. The Air Force uses facility data as part of the decision-making process for future missions. This assessment will give the Maine Air National Guard the tools to better compete for future Air Force missions.

*The General Fund increases \$45,000 in FY24.*

This completes the initiatives for facility funding. I will finish with the last 4 initiatives for this program which address unique Maine National Guard requirements. They begin on page A-182.

Page A-182

Initiative #4 provides funding to utilize MENG members on State Active Duty to prepare for and/or execute state missions. The Maine National Guard must train, exercise, plan and prepare for State missions. Monthly drill and 2-week annual training is funded by the federal government and must support the organizing, training and equipping the National Guard federal mission. Having a fund dedicated for State Active Duty allows the Maine National Guard to focus some resources on state missions. This funding will allow for preparedness activities, training, exercises, and planning. These activities include but are not limited to training for State Disaster Response missions (to include courses, MEMA exercises, County Exercises, and Maine National Guard internal state support exercise) as well as conducting planning and preparation for potential State Disaster Response missions.

*The General Fund increases \$148,000 in both FY24 and FY25.*

Initiative #5 provides funding for communications equipment at the Woodville Training Area. The Woodville Training Area is developing a fire station equipped with two fire-

fighting vehicles which will provide fire response services in support of crew-mounted weapons firing range operations and ambient fire threats.

*The General Fund increases \$20,000 in both FY24 and FY25.*

Page A-183

Initiative #1 provides funding to support MENG recruiting and retention efforts. This funding will be used to place 3 people on State Active Duty to support Army and Air National Guard recruiters with applicant contact, screening, medical packages, waivers and data entry. With an administrative assistant conducting these activities, our professionally trained recruiters will be able to prioritize their efforts toward more direct engagement with qualified applicants.

*The General Fund increases \$154,000 in both FY24 and FY25.*

Initiative #3 and final initiative for this program provides funding for MENG family and youth support programs. This initiative provides funding for safe sitter classes, leadership development retreats, sporting goods and sanitation items (tissues, sanitizer, first aid kits) for the Maine National Guard Youth Camp, and annual Mad Science events held at three locations around the state. Children of National Guard members deal with deployment and family issues their peers don't experience. MENG child & youth events allow them to connect with other kids dealing with the same challenges.

*The General Fund increases \$30,000 in both FY24 and FY25.*

The next program I will discuss is Veterans Services.

### **Veterans Services 0110**

*The Bureau of Maine Veterans Services provides support services to veterans including housing, medical and hospital care, educational aid and compensation, vocational rehabilitation, burials and nursing homes. There are 7 regional offices and a central office located at Camp Keyes to provide services to veterans. The Maine Veterans' Memorial Cemetery System consists of four cemeteries located on Civic Center Drive, Augusta; Mt. Vernon Road, Augusta; Lombard Road, Caribou; and Stanley Road, Springvale. The Veterans Services program funds Personal Services, All Other which consists of professional services, travel, state vehicle operation, utility, rent, repairs, insurance, general operations, fuel, technology, clothing, equipment, supplies, highway materials, miscellaneous grants and STA-CAP. The Bureau incurs Capital Expenditures costs for equipment used for the burials. There is no state match requirement for federal funding.*

The Maine Bureau of Veterans Services is dedicated to securing the benefits and entitlements that are rightfully deserved by Maine veterans and their families. As federal laws evolve, grant opportunities multiply, and programs expand, the need for enhanced resources and services continues to grow. The Bureau oversees the Veterans Emergency Financial Assistance Program, Homeless Veteran Prevention Coordination Program, and Homeless Veterans Standdown which have aided 204 veterans

experiencing housing insecurities this past year, as well as normal daily activities of running and maintaining four veteran cemeteries, and seven veterans' services offices around the state that provide access to various other state and federal veteran programs. To maintain and amplify these vital services, the bureau has submitted a budget request that will provide the necessary resources, ultimately improving care for our valued veteran community.

Initiatives for this program start on page A-186.

#### Page A-186

Initiative #1 will fund the increase in rates for the Security and Employment Service Center which provides HR and financial services.

*The General Fund increases \$42,660 in both FY24 and FY25.*

Initiative #2 is an approved reorganization for the Management Analyst in the Veterans Services division of the Bureau whose duties have evolved because of changing State and Federal programs and benefits. This initiative continues funding for an approved initiative in the FY23 Supplemental Budget.

*The General Fund increases \$13,114 in FY24 and \$16,841 in FY25.*

Initiative #3 is an approved reorganization of the cemetery maintenance manager to a Cemetery Deputy Superintendent due primarily to an increasing complex and multi-faceted cemetery operation which increases the administrative requirements of this position. This initiative continues funding for an approved initiative in the FY23 Supplemental Budget.

*The General Fund increases \$7,355 in FY24 and \$11,525 in FY25.*

#### Page A-187

Initiative #1 provides funding for the burial of State National Guard and Reserve members in the Maine Veterans' Memorial Cemetery system. In 2022, the Legislature passed Public Law 2021, Chapter 593 to enact Maine Revised Statutes, Title 37-B, section 504, subsection 4 which allow the interment of State National Guard and Reserve members who would not otherwise qualify under the Department of Veterans Affairs standards to be buried in the State Veteran Cemeteries. Since passing of this law our department has learned the National Cemetery Association and Department of Veterans Affairs will not provide a headstone or grave marker for these service members, nor will they provide the State with their standard plot allowance. The plot allowance is used for the maintenance and perpetual care of the Maine Veterans' Cemetery System. Interring National Guard and Reserve service members in our cemetery system will utilize a considerable amount of land and resources, both of which are limited. Our department can't absorb these costs. Without this funding, families of our interred service members will have to pay for these services. This initiative continues funding for an approved initiative in the FY23 Supplemental Budget.

*The General Fund increases \$90,000 in both FY24 and FY25.*

Initiative #2 provides general administrative funding for the bureau. An increase in Veterans Services Officer positions, paired with ongoing staffing shortages across the Bureau, has led to an increased need for both training and travel. There is an anticipated need for Maine Veterans Memorial Cemetery and Maine Veterans Dental Network webforms which will require additional funding for the technology contracts.

*The General Fund increases \$78,000 in FY24 and \$83,117 in FY25.*

Initiative #3 funds an annual headstone and grave marker maintenance contract for the cemeteries. The National Cemetery Association has strict guidelines and inspection criteria. Due to Maine's harsh weather conditions wreaking havoc on the already placed headstones, these requirements call for a significant amount of labor which the Bureau cannot provide.

*The General Fund increases \$180,000 in both FY24 and FY25.*

Initiatives #4&5 fund the lease of 4 state vehicles for cemetery and the Veterans Homeless Program. The 2 vehicles for the cemetery will replace unserviceable trucks. The 2 vehicles for the veteran homeless program are a new requirement. They necessary to carry out the mission of the Homeless Veterans Coordination Team. This team doubled in size as a result of Public Law 2021, Chapter 429 which added 2 Veteran Service Officers.

*For both initiatives the General Fund increases \$33,000 in FY24 and \$36,000 in FY25.*

Initiative #6 funds the replacement of 6 utility vehicles (UTV) in use at cemeteries across the state. The existing utility vehicles are beyond their useful life and require excessive repair to keep them in service. The initiative is to purchase 3 UTVs each year of the biennium.

*The General Fund increases \$75,000 in both FY24 and FY25.*

Initiative #7 funds temporary seasonal personnel services for the burial season at the cemeteries. This initiative provides funding for an additional 320 hours or 1 month for 2 people at the Northern and Central Maine cemeteries.

*The General Fund increases \$6,130 in both FY24 and FY25.*

Page A-188

Initiative #1 funds the projected increase cost to heat facilities at the cemeteries. The new Master Agreement increases the cost from \$2.48/gal to \$3.92/gal for a 58% increase in heating fuel cost for the bureau.

*The General Fund increases \$14,250 in both FY24 and FY25.*

Initiative #2 provides one-time funding for a roof project at the Mt. Vernon Road cemetery in Augusta. The cedar shingles, on the existing roof of the administrative building, are 22 years old and falling off. With the quickly deteriorating condition, it is expected that the roof may begin to leak after this upcoming winter season, possibly sooner.

*The General Fund increases \$200,000 in FY24.*

Initiative #3 funds a one-time grout and masonry repair project for the cemetery in Caribou. Pieces of grout and brick have begun to crumble and fall into the maintenance area. The project is required to shore up the building envelope.

*The General Fund increases \$10,000 in FY24.*

Initiative #4 establishes a Contract Grant Manager in the bureau. The position would immediately assume responsibility for 16 existing contracts which total \$2.19 million, manage the annual Staff Sergeant Parker Gordon Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program of \$750K, the annual Maine Veterans Dental Network Grant of \$100k, the Health Resources and Services Administration-Community Project Funding grant program for the Maine Veterans Home as well as assume the application process for three future federal capital improvement grants for the cemetery and four grants for homeless standdown. Currently contract and grants activities are shared among several employees within the bureau.

*The General Fund increases \$112,539 in FY24 and \$118,404 in FY25.*

Initiative #5 funds the proposed reorganization to make the Superintendent of Buildings a confidential employee. This position is required to provide testimony, write rules, and draft department legislation, and represent the department regarding veterans' cemetery issues. There are currently 2 like positions in the department classified as Confidential.

*The General Fund increases \$4,471 in FY24 and \$4,458 in FY25.*

Initiative #6 funds the proposed reorganization to make the Supervisor of Veterans Services a confidential employee. This position is policy influencing, prepares budgets and prioritizes spending, and represents the bureau before regional steering committees and the legislature. Updating this to a confidential classification is in line with the scope of the position.

*The General Fund increases \$8,399 in FY24 and \$8,701 in FY25.*

Initiative #7 is now an approved reorganization of our Business Manager to a Public Service Coordinator I is now approved. This will be corrected in the Change Package. Business functions have increased in complexity and scope with an increased budget and new grant opportunities. This position provides oversight of business functions of 48 employees throughout the Bureau's seven field offices, 18 itinerant field offices, four veterans cemeteries, and central office.

*The General Fund increases \$14,890 in FY24 and \$16,262 in FY25.*

Initiative #1 adjusts funding to revenues as recommended in the December 1, 2022 forecast of the Revenue Forecasting Committee. The Bureau's Other Special Revenue Funds are derived predominately from table game distributions.

*The Other Special Revenue Funds increases \$119,771 in FY24 and \$120,968 in FY25.*

This concludes the initiatives for the Veterans Services program. Next is the Veterans Temporary Assistance Fund on this same page.

### **Veterans Temporary Assistance Fund Z268**

*The program provides funding for temporary assistance to eligible veterans as prescribe by Maine Revised Statutes, Title 37-B, §505, sub-§§1-B and 1-C.*

There are no new initiatives for this program. And now the final program I will discuss in on page A-190.

### **Veterans' Homelessness Prevention Partnership Fund Z298**

*Veterans' Homelessness Prevention Partnership Fund, a non-lapsing fund, is established under the bureau for the purpose of receiving funds from state, federal and other sources, including donations from private citizens, corporations, and entities for the purpose of this section. The bureau shall use the fund to provide reimbursement to human services-based volunteer organizations that provide transitional housing to homeless veterans.*

There are no new initiatives for this program.

I will now move on to the language portion of the bill. DVEM's initiatives are on pages 35 & 36.

### **Part OO**

Part OO establishes the Maine Veterans' Memorial Cemetery System Care Fund as an interest-bearing account. Essentially this fund is established for the perpetual care of the cemeteries. The majority of funds deposited into this account are from the plot allowances received from the Department of Veterans Affairs. This should be an interest baring account so that monies received now will be sufficient to cover care and maintenance costs in the future.

### **Part PP**

Part PP carries the unexpended balance of the \$400,000 provided in Public Law 2021, Chapter 398 for environmental closure of the Maine Military Authority. Maine law

requires specific activities to occur when a hazardous waste generating facility closes. Currently we have completed Phase I (Investigation and Sampling Plan) and are in the final stages of Phase 2 (Sampling and Remedial Action Plan). There is a requirement to perform some remediation at the site. We anticipate needing funding in FY24 to fund these remediation activities. The unexpended balance is approximately \$258,000.

This concludes my testimony. Thank you and I along with my staff would be happy to address any questions you may have.