

LD 313 "An Act to Ensure Consistency in Retirement Plans for Certain Law Enforcement Officer"

**Maine Law Enforcement Coalition
Testimony of Kevin M. Anderson – MSLEA Executive Director
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Good Afternoon Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder and distinguished members of the Labor and Housing Committee,

My name is Kevin Anderson from Eddington Maine, and I represent the Maine Law Enforcement Coalition. I am here to speak in my current capacity as the Executive Director of the Maine State Law Enforcement Association (MSLEA). The MSLEA currently represents approximately 400 full time, state law enforcement officers throughout the state to include Game Wardens, Marine Patrol Officers, Forest Rangers, Probation Officers, Juvenile Corrections Officers, amongst others. MSLEA is also proud to be a founding partner of the Maine Law Enforcement Coalition, which, along with the Maine Association of Police, the Maine State Troopers Association, and the Fraternal Order of Police, represents over 90% of the full time certified, state, municipal and county first responders.

I am here to speak in support of **LD 313 "An Act to Ensure Consistency in Retirement Plans for Certain Law Enforcement Officers"**.

When the bill was initially proposed, the intention was to create a pathway for State law enforcement officers to transition from one State law enforcement position to another within state government and have available to them the same opportunity for retirement portability that others enjoy who leave state service to go to a PLD, or similarly from a PLD to State service. Currently, no portability between retirement plans exists for State LEOs and this bill serves to correct that penalty.

The first question I usually get asked about this bill is what is the fiscal impact. The answer is that it is up to the employer to decide that with the employee. The language was drafted to allow flexibility as it relates to who pays the cost for the employee to bring over their years of service from one state retirement plan to another, either due to a change in the retirement system for the job title or by way of moving to another retirement plan in a new position.

Currently, members of a PLD(participating local district) retirement plan, enjoy the ability to get service credits for years of service earned inside the PLD plan. The PLD member is required to "buy back" the years of service to use the service credits toward the state retirement plan.

This bill will allow the employer seeking to hire an employee from one state retirement plan to another, the option of paying part or all of the cost of the employees service credits, if funding allows. The employer also has the ability to pass the burden on to the employee if that funding is not available.

Currently there are numerous state employees that are members of MSLEA who would benefit from this portability bill, and I am sure there are numerous more who may seek to take advantage of it. In the MSLEA, Game Warden Pete Herring is one of those people. Warden Herring was a Correctional Investigator with the Department of Corrections. He served as a Corrections Investigator for 9 years. Warden Herring had the opportunity to pursue a career with the Maine Warden Service and took advantage of it. Warden Herring was under the understanding at the time he took the Game Warden job that his service credits as a Corrections Investigator would carry over to his new job as a Game Warden. As Warden Herring neared the end of this career as a warden he soon realized that his service credits did not count toward his retirement in the 25 year special plan he moved into. If this bill were to pass, Warden Herring would have the option of buying his service credits toward his current retirement plan, at no cost to the state, unless the state felt compelled to assist Warden Herring with the costs.

Investigators with the Maine Bureau of Motor Vehicles, Investigators with the Maine Attorney Generals Office, Forest Rangers and Forest Ranger Supervisors are also amongst the list of employees who have served the state either under multiple plans or have served in other public service positions in other plans and could be made whole by this bill.

It is the belief of the Maine Law Enforcement Coalition that this bill is currently the fairest way in which to address the current problem that exists within the state retirement system, with little to potentially no fiscal impact to the state of Maine. Therefore, the Maine Law Enforcement Coalition would ask that the committee vote for this bill as written, "ought to pass".

It is the belief of the coalition that this bill will prove to be a vital tool in the recruitment and retention of potential employees, especially in regards to the law enforcement bargaining units. Currently law enforcement is struggling to recruit employees to fill vital law enforcement positions that keep us all safe from day to day. This will give employers a new tool to recruit potential candidates.

A recent Workforce Engagement Survey conducted by the State of Maine Department of Administrative and Financial Services is still analyzed by an outside experienced vendor. I was provided a small amount of initial data from the survey results. The survey revealed that "Benefit Options" was one of the top five reasons employees came to work for Maine State Government, followed by "Job Security", "Make a difference for the people of Maine", "The work seemed interesting", and "Public Service is important to me".

We are aware that the cost to some employees will likely be significant. It should be the choice of the employee to decide as to whether or not the cost is worth the benefit. To some it may not but to others, for a number of different personal reasons, like health, family situations, other potential employment, etc, it might be.

With all that being said, I would like to thank you for your time, and I would be happy to answer any questions that you have at this time.