

March 28, 2023

Chairpersons Tipping, Roeder, and members of the Committee of Labor and Housing, thank you for allowing this bill to be discussed today.

My name is Sari Ohmart. I am a resident of Brewer, Maine taught in the State of Maine for 39 years.

I would like to thank all of the legislators for presenting LD 1096 to the legislature.

I began my teaching career in New Hampshire. After a few years, I came to teach in Maine where I received a significant decrease in pay. In late 2019 I officially retired from teaching. It has been disheartening to say the least to discover how much I am being penalized for having been a public school teacher in the State of Maine. Upon retirement, I knew that I would not be eligible for any of my husband's Social Security, or mine which I contributed to due to Maine being one of the states that has the offset. However, when I discovered that my COLA was only on a portion of my pension and that it wasn't even close to the percent that the Federal Government was giving Social Security I truly felt regret for choosing to teach in the State of Maine. Since my retirement, just a few years ago, the prices of things have sky-rocketed. Groceries, fuel, and electricity especially have had major increases. Every month when paying bills I feel like I am losing ground. It is sad that I hope I don't outlive my husband as I would then have to rely on my pension alone which appears to be going backwards not forwards. I do not know how households that rely solely on State of Maine pensions can survive.

LD 1096 is a good start to helping retired teachers like myself. Thank you for considering this step forward.

Sincerely,

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