



Good afternoon Senator Nangle, Representative Stover, and Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government.

My name is Adam Zuckerman and I am the lobbyist for the Maine People's Alliance. MPA is Maine's largest community action organization with over 32,000 members across the state. Our mission is to create a world where everyone has what they need, contributes what they can, and no one is left behind.

That is why I am honored to testify in favor of LD 1155, "An Act to Address Legislative Salaries."

First of all, I want to commend Representative Woodsome, Representative Osher, and all of the other cosponsors for uniting around this important bipartisan effort. This may be the most ideologically diverse list of cosponsors I have ever seen. I imagine that it's the first time that some of them have cosponsored the same bill. It also may be the first time that MPA and some of the cosponsors have been on the same side of an issue.

That's because Republicans, Democrats and Independents alike recognize that the status quo is not sustainable and does not serve the people of Maine. We know that in order for the citizen's Legislature to best serve Mainers, work needs to pay a fair, living wage.

The very definition of the title "Representative," defines your sacred elected duty—to represent your constituents. In theory, we have a citizen's legislature. However, the extremely low pay for long hours prevents the Maine House and Senate from representing our state as well as they could.

As you well know, for much of the year, serving in the Legislature is a full-time job – if not more. However, legislators are paid far below minimum wage. The combination of the extremely low pay and enormous time commitment prevents qualified Mainers from serving and leads many of those who do to struggle.

Low pay creates a structural barrier to legislative service for young people, people of color, and low-income and working class Mainers. Because of this, the Legislature does

not accurately reflect Maine voters. There are vital perspectives that are underrepresented or even missing from the conversation because too many Mainers cannot afford to serve.

As of 2021, Maine had 190,000 workers who earned a living in the low-wage retail, hospitality, childcare and health care support industries — nearly a third of the state's total workforce.¹ However, the 130th legislature had just 12 lawmakers who worked in those sectors.²

Even for those who are able to serve, many are constantly faced with choices between legislative work and paying their bills. Some legislators have had to miss votes because they cannot afford to miss work. Many have had to choose between their commitments as legislators and their day jobs, with one or both suffering as a result. That's not right.

This is not a problem that discriminates across ideological or party lines. It affects us all.

That's why we are proud to support LD 1155, a common-sense bipartisan solution to strengthen our democracy. Thank you.

¹ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. "Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics." May 2021.
https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_me.htm

² Neumann, Dan. "Maine's 'citizen legislature' is mostly business owners or retired, not working class." Maine Beacon. May 4, 2022.
<https://mainebeacon.com/maines-citizen-legislature-is-mostly-business-owners-or-retired-not-working-class/>