



MAINE AFL-CIO

A Union of Unions Standing for Maine Workers

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Testimony of Maine AFL-CIO Legislative & Political Director, Adam Goode, in support of LD 1760, “An Act to Include Certain Crisis Outreach and Crisis Services Workers Under the 1998 Special Plan for Retirement” and LD 1761 “An Act to Include Certain Mental Health Workers Under the 1998 Special Plan for Retirement”

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder and members of the Labor and Housing Committee, my name is Adam Goode I’m the Legislative and Political Director of the Maine AFL-CIO We represent 40,000 working people in the state of Maine We work to improve the lives and working conditions of our members and all working people We testify in support of LD 1761 and LD 1760

These two bills add employees who perform difficult and dangerous jobs providing support to vulnerable people to the 1998 Special Plan for certain Maine Public Employees Retirement System members LD 1760 adds employees who provide crisis outreach and services to adults with developmental disabilities or intellectual disabilities in a community-based or residential setting LD 1761 adds employees employed on October 1, 2023 and hired thereafter who provide direct care to persons in need of mental health services in a community-based or residential setting or to residents or patients of mental health institutions to the plan

Working people who serve the public as mental health workers doing crises outreach and direct care in community-based and residential settings perform emotionally strenuous and physically demanding work These workers provide a great public benefit to everyone while facing danger, risking injury and being exposed to communicable diseases daily It is a hallmark of the labor movement that working people should be able to retire with dignity and respect These two bills help correct inequities that have only increased as mental health workers have seen the risks of their work increase in recent years, both before and especially during the pandemic

These workers need to retire at the earlier age because of the physical and emotional stress associated with the job Few people realize just how many assaults mental health workers endure on a regular basis due to patient violence Crises workers have unique jobs and regularly go into private homes alone to provide treatment for mentally ill individuals in crises It is typical for a crises worker to be reluctant to involve law enforcement as a backup for fear of escalating the crisis, resulting in the worker facing severe physical assaults, including broken bones and

concessions Asking that people do this work at age 61 or 62 after decades of grueling labor is unfair and just too much of a demand

We are aware that there are other efforts before this committee to make changes to the 1998 Special Plan that benefit working people As you work on fixing the problems with the system that result in workers being left out of the opportunity to retire with dignity and respect, we ask that you make sure these mental health workers providing direct care be included