

Senator Nangle, Representative Stover, members of the Committee on State and Local Government, my name is Winifred Malia and live in Scarborough. I am a Principal Economic Research Analyst, I have worked for the Maine Dept of Labor almost 36 years, and I am the current Chapter President of the Eichel-Crinion Chapter of the Maine Service Employee Association. I am submitting this testimony on my own time, using my own personal devices in support of LD 1854, An Act to Complete and Implement the Comprehensive Review of the Classification and Compensation System for Executive Branch Employees .

As you know, the Dept of Labor provides vital services for the State of Maine such as employment and training services for workers and employers, workplace safety training, wage and hour standards, services for the blind & visually impaired, deaf, hard of hearing & late deafened, vocational rehabilitation, labor market information, and economic stability from unemployment benefits while workers find reemployment. In order to provide these services, the Dept of Labor needs to be able to fully staff the positions. Retention and recruitment of qualified employees is made more difficult as the pay gap widens without any meaningful progress to close it.

The pay gap is causing positions to remain vacant or employees to accept positions elsewhere because the wages are on average 20% lower than similar public and private sector positions. There are regular job postings for rehabilitation counselor, careercenter consultants, occupational safety specialist, and customer service representatives to name a few because qualified individuals are not applying due to the low wages. There are numerous employees that have or will be retiring in the next few years. These positions need to be filled with qualified individuals and that will only happen if wages are competitive.

The pay gap has been an issue for the last 20 years with no meaningful efforts to resolve it. Morale is effected when some employees are given stipends while the same issue of recruitment and retention exists all over state government. I was on the MSEA Bargaining Team 2 years ago, the administration says that the pay gap should not be a bargaining issue but a legislative issue. I feel the pay gap should be just as important an issue as raising the salary of the Governor and members of the Legislature. As Representative David Woodsome said about raising the pay for members of the Legislature - it is long overdue. I think resolving the pay gap is long overdue as well. Now is the time to use some of the surplus on the employees of the State of Maine.

I am asking that you support LD 1854 for the workers of the Dept of Labor and the rest of the Executive Branch that serve the citizens of th State of Maine every

day by closing the pay gap. I want to thank the committee for listening.

Winifred Malia
Scarborough, ME