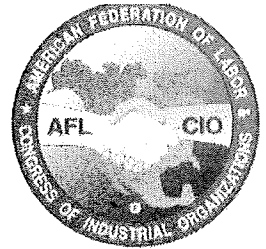




MAINE AFL-CIO

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Testimony of Maine AFL-CIO Legislative & Political Director, Adam Goode, in Support of LD 1854, "An Act to Complete and Implement the Comprehensive Review of Classification and Compensation Systems for Executive Branch Employees"

Senator Nangle, Representative Stover and members of the State and Local Government 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 1854.

State of Maine workers deserve a workplace where they are paid consistent with the labor demands of their positions. This legislation requires the State to do just that through completion and implementation of the classification and compensation study. Our current compensation and classification system was put in place in the late 1970s. Under both statute and the civil service rules, the State, through the Bureau of Human Resources, is required to perform active management and oversight, including regularly reviewing all positions and regularly performing comparative studies of salaries for State workers. Unfortunately, the State's oversight has been haphazard; it has failed to adequately manage the systems in any comprehensive manner for over 3 decades.

As a result, we have a serious recruitment and retention problem stemming from the fact that pay for State workers has lagged far behind those of their peers for years. In 2019, the State and Maine Service Employee Association SEIU Local 1989 began work to do this study, but it was delayed due to COVID. What information we do have includes a market pay report that showed State workers are underpaid 15% on average compared to their peers. Keep in mind, there are some positions that are underpaid far more than 15%, including customer service representatives at state parks, workers at state run schools, chemists, mechanics and engineers.

Over the past several years, MSEA has repeatedly asked whether the State intended to bring back the consultant to finish the study, but until recently, the State was noncommittal. Finally, a few months ago, the State responded that they were not interested in bringing back the consultant, and signaled their belief that they could finish the review themselves. Lack of clear classifications results in confusion for workers and means workers for the State often leave one department for another. The initial results of the study were jarring, and we find it unacceptable that the state has not finished their review of classifications.

In addition to finishing this study, we think it is important to maintain a schedule for future compensation studies and classification reviews and provide a mechanism to hold the State accountable. Future state workers

should not be subject to the same lack of workplace improvement that folks have had to deal with in recent decades.

In order to provide funding to address the pay gap, the bill includes an important part that establishes a State Employee Compensation Stabilization Fund to help fund closing the state employee pay gap. The stabilization fund would be part of the State's official cascade for the distribution of unappropriated General Fund surpluses.

Lastly, as we have not had serious attention devoted to this issue in recent years, we feel it is important to have some guardrails to make sure this work is finished. To that end, the bill includes a requirement that the State complete and implement the results of the current classification and compensation studies by July 1, 2024. Should this deadline not be met, the State would be required to provide a 5% across-the-board pay increase to all state workers.

Public sector workers take their work very seriously, and their labor should not be exploited by exploiting them through poor pay and unclear classification of jobs. We ask that you support LD 1854.