

LD 1854

An Act to Complete and Implement the Comprehensive Review of the Classification and Compensation System for Executive Branch Employees

PUBLIC HEARING BEFORE THE

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND HOUSING COMMITTEE

May 12, 2023

TESTIMONY ON BEHALF OF THE MAINE LAW ENFORCEMENT LABOR COALITION

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and distinguished members of the Labor & Housing Committee. My name is Michael Edes, and I am before you today representing the Maine Law Enforcement Coalition. The Maine Law Enforcement Coalition represents the Maine Troopers Association, the Maine State Law Enforcement Association, the Maine Association of Police, and the Fraternal Order of Police. Collectively we represent all law enforcement professionals employed by the State of Maine from York County to Aroostook County.

I stand before you today to speak 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 each of our respected labor organizations currently negotiates with the State of Maine, we find ourselves significantly behind in wages to municipal, county other New England agencies that provide the same service and do the same jobs. The gap in wage disparity increases each year as we face some of the largest number of public safety vacancies in our State. In order to continue to provide adequate public safety for citizens and visitors to our state, we must hire the very best to patrol our communities, woods and waterways.

Enacting legal requirements for the State to continually review classification plans to ensure we have accurate market pay studies is essential to recruitment and retention of our public safety professionals. The latest Critical Insights on Maine Survey indicates that nine out of ten voters in Maine believe the state's shortage of law enforcement officers should be a priority for lawmakers, including two out of three who believe this shortage should be a major priority. This is one area in which lawmakers can support most Mainers in helping address our staffing shortages.

Currently the state has been working on a comprehensive pay study started in 2020, that is still not fully complete with addendums and updates only. Since 2020 the market value of law enforcement wages has changed significantly due to a decrease in applicants coupled with high numbers of vacancies. Utilizing 2020 data is a train that has left the station and is not relevant

to today's discussions. This bill would require the state to conduct this work with due diligence in assessing current market value for jobs within the Executive Branch.

We strongly ask for your support on LD 1854, on behalf of the State of Maine's Law Enforcement Officers. We are certainly available to you during the work session should you have any specific questions relating to our members.

I would be happy to answer any questions from any committee members.

Michael Edes – Maine Law Enforcement Coalition