



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Testimony of Representative Drew Gattine Presenting

LD 1854, An Act to Complete and Implement the Comprehensive Review of the Classification and Compensation System for Executive Branch Employees

Before the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government

Senator Nangle, Representative Stover and my distinguished colleagues on the State and Local Government Committee, my name is Drew Gattine and I am honored to represent parts of Saco, Scarborough and Westbrook in the Maine House. I am pleased to appear before you this morning to present **LD 1854, An Act to Complete and Implement the Comprehensive Review of the Classification and Compensation System for Executive Branch Employees.**

In 1992 I had the honor to come to work as an employee of the State of Maine in the Attorney General's Office. It was in most respects a great place to work. I had amazing co-workers, managers I respected, clients at the Department of Human Services who were doing life-saving work each and every day. It instilled in me a devotion to public services that still drives me today. I can honestly say that there is no way that I would be standing here doing this job in 2023 if I hadn't had my first job in public service back in the 1990s.

But I will also tell you that those times were very tough for state employees. It was the aftermath of the 1991 state shutdown and the state was still feeling the effects. There were forced shutdown days, and furlough days and each employee was subject to a 39 hour work week. All these things amounted to reduced salaries and pay cuts. Budgets were basically balanced on the backs of state employees. Salaries for public employees lagged behind their private sector counterparts.

I wish I could tell you that 30 years later that this situation has all changed, but unfortunately that is not the case.

Maine has an amazing workforce. People who are well educated, highly skilled, experienced and driven to deliver the best possible service to Maine people. Our workforce is diverse but the common thread is a passion for public service.

These are particularly tough times for state workers. The workforce shortage that we are experiencing statewide is hitting our state workforce particularly hard. As people retire or leave

state service for other reasons, Maine has historic levels of vacancies. But the work that needs to get done doesn't go away and the demands don't shrink and the great people we have are being forced to do more with less.

This bill is an opportunity for us as lawmakers and policymakers to double down on our commitment to making sure that state workers are treated fairly and are supported and are in the best possible position to deliver the best possible service for Maine people. We have to start by acknowledging the significant pay gap that exists between our workers and people who do the exact same job in the private sector and for other states. Independent studies have shown that this pay gap is about 15%. This is fundamentally unfair to people who show up every day and do difficult and demanding work on behalf of Maine people. It is also unsustainable to the business of the State of Maine and makes it difficult for us to recruit and fill open positions. At the end of the day the workers are shortchanged and the Mainers who rely on the work getting done are at risk of getting shortchanged too.

So let's come together and commit ourselves to changing this. This bill will require the State on a regular basis to study compensation and to review our very outdated classification system. The current compensation and classification system has been in place since the 1970s and does not accurately reflect the reality of our workforce requirements. The bill would require an initial review to be completed in 2024. The bill funds the review and requires the state to move forward with implementation of the results. It funds implementation via a transfer of one percent of the unappropriated surplus into a dedicated fund at the end of each fiscal year.

Coming behind me you are going to hear testimony from workers who will tell you much more than I can about why this bill is so important. I've had the chance to talk to a lot of them myself. I think that you are going to find their testimony not only compelling in terms of understanding why this bill needs to pass, I think you are going to find it inspiring and encouraging. I think hearing their testimony is going to make you proud of what our state workers do for Maine people each and every day.

I urge you to support this bill and greatly appreciate the co-sponsorship of many members of the legislature.

I am happy to answer questions.

Thank you.