

Testimony of Jeff McCabe
Maine Service Employees Association, SEIU Local 1989

In Regards to the Governor's Proposed Budget Change Package, LD 258
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations & Financial Affairs,
Tuesday, May 17, 2023, State House Room 228

Remarks of Day 2 of the Change Package

Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, and members of the Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs, I am Jeff McCabe of the Maine Service Employees Association, Local 1989 of the Service Employees International Union. Our union represents over 13,000 workers, including workers in all three branches of Maine State Government, the Maine Community College System, Maine Maritime Academy, Child Development Services, the Maine Educational Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing/Governor Baxter School for the Deaf, as well as public workers for the City of Lewiston, Lewiston Schools, City of Auburn, and York County Government.

Members of our union are encouraged by many initiatives impacting them in the Governor's proposed budget change package, including additional funding for Maine's Judicial System, funding for Maine State Retirees, funding for the Department of Transportation's infrastructure work, and funding to address the housing crisis.

We support all reorganizations and reclassification work in the change package and budget, some of which is outside MSEA bargaining units.

We support additional positions in the Judicial Department and hope the legislature will continue to help Judicial Branch dig out of their back log and make needed investments.

We are concerned at Department of Environmental Protection that staffing shortages are creating slower processing time for permits and key regulatory issues are not getting the resources needed to manage recent legislative changes and tasks. PFAS monitoring and planning is just one example.

We want to again point out that the Department of Health and Human Services workers are buried by work and while we support reclasses in change package it is not enough. The health and safety of all Maine people young and old is paramount to our members who work for Maine DHHS, including those who work for the Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS). The job done by OCFS workers is incredibly difficult, high stress and high stakes. Workers at OCFS do this work because they care deeply about Maine children. They are determined to protect them, support them and build families that also can protect and support

them. Recruitment and retention of trained, qualified and compassionate staff is essential in making these goals possible.

Clarifying points.

I want to be clear today and explain- MSEA negotiates with the Executive Branch and the legislature provides the funding to fund those contracts. Each side can bring proposals to the negotiations.

Work Load-Head Count, Reclassifications and Reorganizations come before the Legislature for funding and approval. We need a systematic approach.

I have provided you all a yellow folder of member testimony on LD 1854. I don't expect folks to be able to read it all today. You will see stories of state employees from around the state and across agencies talking about work load and pay issues. Please let me know if you would like to connect with any of them and I would be happy to answer any questions.

May 12, 2023

Senator Nangle, Representative Stover, members of the Committee on State and Local Government,

My name is Cynthia Oakes, I live in Augusta, and I'm testifying on my own personal time in support of LD 1854, An Act to Complete and Implement the Comprehensive Review of the Classification and Compensation System for Executive Branch Employees, sponsored by Representative Drew Gattine.

I work at the Department of Health and Human Services as a Planning and Research Associate and I have been working for the State for 29 years.

When I first returned to work after having my kids, I made more per hour as a temp worker than equivalent State positions paid. But full-time work, permanent hours, health insurance, and paid time off made up for the difference in pay.

As time went on, inadequate cost of living increases, mandatory shutdowns, early close on Fridays, and freezes on merit increases meant I was falling further behind.

I worked hard and furthered my education and training so I could advance in my career. I started as a Clerk Typist II with a pay range of 8, and currently I am a Planning and Research Associate at pay range 23. At each step of the way my pay has lagged behind the private sector, but more flexible time off was important to me while raising my family. At times I worked a part time second job.

There have been two pay studies in my almost thirty years with the State and each has shown that there is a pay gap. The first study completed the Administrative group, and they all got a pay increase. Just after that study, my hard work and new skills got me a job in the Professional & Technical bargaining unit. Improving myself meant I made less than my previous position and the rest of the pay study was dropped before completion.

I recently sat on two interview panels where we were down to one candidate for each position before we even scheduled the interviews. The reason each candidate gave for declining was pay. Fortunately the other candidates were well qualified and are working out. One of the two later told me that she was offered \$8000 more for a private sector job but needed the flexible schedule we offered. To take a State job means less pay that erodes more each year. We can't continue to rely on attracting good workers by offering flexible hours. Especially when there is a shortage of workers.

Once my children were grown, I once more reviewed my priorities. Having worked under both Social Security and State retirement system (MainePERS) I did a little research and because I did not have enough working years left to avoid the Windfall Elimination offset, and because my part time jobs were low paying, it made more sense to continue my career with the State. Now at sixty six years old I am still working because each year adds 2% to my retirement income. I am so lucky to be healthy and able to do this.

I am proud to work for the people of Maine. Proud of my work. Proud of all the skills I learned and applied to my work and life. Proud of my coworkers. I hope to continue to be proud of those who work for the State, but I believe we have reached the point where we will no longer be able to attract the people we need with just flex time to balance offers of higher pay. The State needs to take steps to close the pay gap and ensure that all workers are being compensated well for the important work they do.

Without an investment in our state workers, we will continue to face recruitment and retention problems, and they'll likely get worse in the future. Please support LD 1854.

May 12, 2023

To the Members of the Maine Legislature's Committee on State and Local Government:

I'm Brian Markey. I work for MaineDOT currently as an Assistant Technician and prior to that as a Transportation Worker III. I live in Kenduskeag. I'm writing on my own time in support of LD 1854, An Act to Complete and Implement the Comprehensive Review of the Classification and Compensation System for Executive Branch Employees, sponsored by Representative Drew Gattine

I've been with MaineDOT for seven years. I work seven days a week in order to pay my mortgage, health insurance, childcare and just day-to-day bills – heats, lights and stuff. I have a second job to make ends meet. I'd like to share with you my wages at each job and the work I do for each employer. At my second job, Bangor Aviation Food Service, the parent company that operates the restaurants at BIA, pays me \$30 an hour to service vending machines at the airport. But in my main job, with MaineDOT, I earn less than \$22 an hour operating a \$1.2 million testing vehicle for the department.

You need to know the pay at MaineDOT is not enough to even really survive on. I just barely pay the bills. And it's not just the low pay that's a problem. It's also the huge workloads caused by understaffing. There are so many vacant positions we're all stretched way too thin. In my former job as a transportation worker, I once plowed continuously for 42-and-a-half hours straight, during the bomb cyclone of February 2017. You see double-vision, triple-vision, when you get that tired. This is all dangerous and hard work. It requires our full attention to keep everyone safe, not just the workers but the general public as well.

Throughout Maine DOT, and the rest of state government, there's a big problem with recruiting and retaining qualified workers. It's been going on for decades. Some of you may recall that back in January of 2009, the Maine Department of Administrative and Financial Services contracted with Crescendo Consulting for a labor market survey. That survey found that even back in 2009, MaineDOT highway crews were paid 21.6 percent less than their private sector counterparts.

Whenever a MaineDOT camp is short Transportation Workers, it means everyone else has to work twice as hard. This leaves all of us vulnerable to health and safety problems. You can get rushed and that can lead to problems real fast.

In recent years, there has been some progress in dealing with the recruitment and retention problem at MaineDOT. A Recruitment and Retention Committee over the years took action to make things better in some job classifications. But there's much more work to be done and many more DOT classifications to address. We all know a Department-wide, State-wide solution is needed.

The State must start paying all of us fairly for the hard work we do. Management needs to stop lowballing the pay of state workers and start paying us fairly. You have the latest facts: As of two years ago, State of Maine workers were being paid on average 15 percent less than what our counterparts make throughout New England, and that's even after accounting for regional differences. It's all spelled out in the [2020 State of Maine Market Study Report](#). And it's even worse for some positions. Maintenance mechanics who work for the State of Maine are

unperpaid by 31 percent, according to the report.. It should come as no surprise, then, that because MaineDOT competes with municipalities and the private sector for workers, the pattern of MaineDOT training drivers who then leave state service for better pay in the private sectors and municipalities is continuing.

The State Employee Pay Gap has worsened since that 2020 report came out. State wages haven't kept up with the rising cost of living, so my coworkers and I have been falling further and further behind. That's why I'm asking you to support LD 1854 and, as you craft and vote on the next State Budget, to:

- 1) Address this issue by including in the State Budget the funding necessary to end the State Employee Pay Gap;
- 2) Provide the funding in the State Budget necessary for the Executive Branch of Maine State Government to both complete and implement the ongoing review of the State compensation and classification systems.

Both actions are necessary to ensure the quality MaineDOT services folks count on, as well as the quality services Maine people count on from all other departments of Maine State Government. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Brian Markey
Kenduskeag, Maine

May 12, 2023

To the Members of the Maine Legislature's Committee on State and Local Government:

I'm Dave Boudreau of Holden. I'm writing to you as a private citizen on my own time and as a member of my union, the Maine Service Employees Association. I'm asking you to support of LD 1854, An Act to Complete and Implement the Comprehensive Review of the Classification and Compensation System for Executive Branch Employees, sponsored by Representative Drew Gattine.

I work as a Transportation Worker II for the MaineDOT, a job I've held since November of 2019. I'm writing to tell you there's a real problem with recruiting and retaining MaineDOT workers, and it's mostly because of the State's low pay. Study after study have shown that the State pays us far below what other workers throughout New England are paid for the same work. The fact is, the State just can't get the people to come in or stay at these jobs because of the low wages. This problem is getting worse, not better.

Don't take my word for it on the State's low wages. Please read the 2020 State of Maine Market Study Report. It shows that state workers on average are underpaid by 15% and that maintenance mechanics for the State of Maine are actually underpaid by 31 percent. An earlier study that the State commissioned back in 2009 reached similar conclusions.

I recently was interviewed by WCSH6 TV after work one day about the recruitment and retention problem at MaineDOT. You can watch that story here.

There's been a lot of talk in the Maine Legislature about the need for more funding for infrastructure like roads and bridges, and it's great to see funding for more infrastructure in the proposed State Budget. However, how is the State going to get all that work done without a qualified and experienced MaineDOT workforce? MaineDOT keeps losing workers to better-paying employers both in the private sector and at cities and towns statewide. If MaineDOT wants to have the workforce it needs to maintain our network of roads and bridges, and to carry out all the infrastructure projects in the works, then the State must end the State Employee Pay Gap. There are two things I'm asking you to do to help make that happen:

Please support LD 1854 and provide, in the State Budget, the funding necessary to end the State Employee Pay Gap. Maine State Government must complete and implement the ongoing review of the State compensation and classification systems.

Thank you.

Dave Boudreau

Holden

Testimony in support of LD 1854, An Act to Complete and Implement the Comprehensive Review of the Classification and Compensation System for Executive Branch Employees, sponsored by Representative Drew Gattine

Senator Nangle, Representative Stover, members of the Committee on State and Local Government
My name is Cynthia Barre. As a Maine citizen I am personally providing my written testimony to address concerns of State employment. Thank you for taking the time to listen and to consider our concerns regarding our working conditions.

I started employment with the State of Maine in 2012 after working half of my career in the private sector. I started at MaineCare where the pay was low, the building was sickly, and the job was high stress due to working on many emergent issues. While at MaineCare my team filed an FJA to have our pay scale re-evaluated. It was a long and hard battle which took 5 years. The State fought hard against us. We were not willing to give up and we won. This resulted in moving up one paygrade. By the time this happened I had already left MaineCare and took a new State position.

Currently I work at the Maine Bureau of Insurance. The majority of our job descriptions were written in the 1980's, which is when they were assigned a paygrade. These outdated job descriptions and paygrades are common with the majority of the State's positions.

In 2020 MSEA was successful in getting a Pay Scale Study approved by the State. The study has been completed, however, to date the State has done nothing to consider re-accessing our pay scales. The data in the study reveals that employees in the private sector who have the same job titles and job duties are making considerably more than their counter part does at the State of Maine. Since the study, the MSEA has negotiated our contracts and the State has held strong on not addressing the inequity in our pay, only agreeing to minimal pay raises in each contract negotiation.

Staff retention, and finding the best qualified candidates for State positions, is an issue due to the paygrade of State positions. While I was at MaineCare, Governor LePage put both a hiring freeze and a pay raise freeze on State positions. Due to these two factors if a position became open a new employee could not be hired to fill the position. By the time I left MaineCare I was doing three jobs for the same low paygrade I was hired at. Although today we no longer have a hiring freeze or pay raise freeze the issue of inequity in our pay and staff retention still persists. It is hard to find high quality candidates when they see the pay they will be offered.

Telework is also an issue State employees are greatly concerned about. During contract negotiations the State would not allow telework to be written into our contract. Instead the State said they were developing a telework policy. So far this telework policy has been a moving target as it is changed and been reworded more than once. Telework has been a big plus for my team since the pandemic sent us home to work in March of 2020. My Management tells us our work performance and employee morale has increased since we have started working from home. Telework is also a factor for prospective employees, so many companies are now offering full time telework. Between the paygrade and the lack of permanent telework, Management struggles to find the best qualified candidates to fill our State positions.

I would like to ask the Legislature to address the sick buildings we work in as State employees. Currently my building is closed and employees are either working from home or in a temporary State space due to

our building being unhealthy. Since I have worked for the State I have had multiple lung infections and health issues due to toxic air quality in the buildings I have worked in. I have addressed this issue over and over again since 2012 only to have it fall on deaf ears by the Administration. The majority of the State buildings I have been in (for meetings etc.) have made me and others sick.

There are a vast number of State buildings that are in horrible condition and very toxic to employees' health. It would be a significant cost savings to Maine taxpayers to close these old dilapidated buildings and enact a permanent telework policy. I understand this is not an option for all State positions as some employees interface with the public daily, however many employees do not. The State could keep a number of the newer State buildings for employees who must work on site.

In 2021 I was approved through an ADA request form to work from home due to the health ramifications State buildings have caused me. The State put a disclosure in this approval that for the purpose of work operations this approval can be revisited at any time. My long term health ramifications that have been caused by working in these toxic State buildings is not going to change. It is my greatest fear that the State will make me go back to work in a State building. Due to the State's disclosure my ADA approval seems to be the same moving target that our current telework policy is.

I find it both disturbing and sad that I had to fight for nine years and I had to advocate this hard for myself to be allowed to work in healthy working conditions. I can't breathe in State buildings and I have had multiple lung infections due to the condition of the buildings I have worked in. Today I have been working from home for 3 years and I have been breathing freely for these 3 years. I am grateful every day for the privilege of breathing freely. This in itself is sad because breathing freely should not be a privilege, but a right. I hold myself to a high moral standard and I have an excellent work ethic. I ask that my employer respect what I bring to the table with actions that address the concerns of employees. I am about to turn 59 and I thought I would be with the State until I retire. I have been seriously reconsidering this due to the issues I have outlined. Employment elsewhere has become an option that I am researching and considering.

Thank you for your time.

Cynthia Barre

May 12, 2023

Senator Nangle, Representative Stover, members of the Committee on State and Local Government,

I'm Ramona Welton of Augusta. I'm writing as a private citizen in support of LD 1854, An Act to Complete and Implement the Comprehensive Review of the Classification and Compensation System for Executive Branch Employees, sponsored by Representative Drew Gattine.

As a process auditor in my 39th year of service with the Maine Bureau of Motor Vehicles, I know when things add up and when they don't.

Yet again, strong increases in state government revenues are predicted for the coming years on top of the recently projected \$283 million surplus. This follows a trend of several years of recent surpluses. While this is good news, there's a caveat: These surpluses are a direct result of the state government underpaying thousands of state workers throughout our careers. Not one but two state-commissioned reports found the state consistently lowballs pay for state workers compared with other public- and private-sector workers throughout Maine and New England.

A 2009 report documented that Maine Department of Transportation crews were underpaid by 21.6 percent; professionals like engineers and chemists, 17 percent; institutional workers, 11.8 percent; and supervisory workers, 9.6 percent. The Baldacci administration essentially responded by stamping the report "confidential" and instituting 20 unpaid state worker furlough days, further reducing state workers' wages.

Under the LePage administration, state workers went four years without raises and the pensions of state workers and teachers were cut to pay for tax breaks that mostly benefited Maine's wealthiest residents. LePage left hundreds of positions vacant, worsening a crisis in delivering services from plowing snow to answering 911 calls to staffing our psychiatric centers.

Data from 2020 show we're paid 15 percent less than our peers in the private and public sector in Maine and across New England. For some classifications, it's worse: Accountants are underpaid by 20 percent to 33 percent; chemists, 24 percent; civil engineers, 20 percent to 25 percent; mechanics, 31 percent; and correctional officers, 16 percent.

Since then, wage growth for state workers has lagged far behind that of the average Maine worker. In 2022, Mainers saw average raises worth 8.6 percent, while state workers' pay increased only 4 percent. With most employers competing in a tightening labor market, the average worker saw double the nominal raises state workers did, and the pay gap continued to grow.

State job postings tell the story: Custodians, laborers, groundskeepers, park rangers and assistant rangers start at \$15 an hour; legal secretaries, \$15.85; egg and poultry inspectors, \$16.20; accounts-payable clerks, \$16.30; and accountants, \$18.94. State commissioners, environmental groups, state workers and their unions all say the state must address this wage problem. The

impact on services is real. One in 6 positions in state government is vacant — totaling nearly 2,100 vacancies. The reward for those who keep working for the state: forced overtime.

When you're plowing roads, answering 911 calls or working with children and families in crisis, the mental and physical exhaustion of excessive overtime runs the risk of becoming a serious public safety concern. And when the Maine Department of Environmental Protection or Maine State Ferry Service are understaffed, as they've been for years now, it affects our economy.

Currently state workers are in contract negotiations, yet the Bureau of Human Resources has refused to meet with us. Given how far behind the state has fallen, it's no mystery why the state HR director doesn't want to meet with all state workers. It'd be difficult to defend this stark inequity in front of an audience of your own employees.

As one of Maine's largest employers, the state of Maine has a duty to create fair standards for workers across Maine. Instead, the state is actually applying downward pressure on wages as it competes with industries for the same pool of workers.

Some have suggested using the supposed surplus for tax cuts for the wealthiest Mainers. This is offensive; the last round of income tax cuts in 2011 were paid for by dramatically cutting the retirement benefits of state workers and teachers, who don't even receive Social Security benefits.

To be clear, while neither Gov. Janet Mills nor the 131st Legislature created these issues, they have a responsibility to fix them. Please support LD 1854. Thank you.

Senator Nangle, Representative Stover, members of the Committee on State and Local Government, my name is Staci Warren. I am writing on my own personal time in support of LD 1854, An Act to Complete and Implement the Comprehensive Review of the Classification and Compensation System for Executive Branch Employees, sponsored by Representative Drew Gattine.

In 2020, I left my job in higher education to take a supervisory position within the Department of Education. Over the past 3 years I have had the privilege of working with some of the most dedicated employees within the DOE and across the state. I came into the office to manage and organize the administrative work due to the number of staff within our team of fourteen.

Within a year, the team was divided into two teams: the Office of School and Student Supports (OSSS) which now has 18 full-time employees, and two contractors, and the Maine School Safety Center (MSSC), which is woefully underfunded with a staff of eight and that I support as the sole administrative staff person on top of the work I do for OSSS. I continue to work for both teams, at a capacity that now has become unmanageable and yet there is no money to hire another administrative person despite efforts to do so. I cannot give MSSC the support they need and maintain the level of excellence that I expect to give them.

At this same time, I was also informed that when a former colleague resigned, the work was redistributed and I would be expected to pick up 1/3 of her work responsibilities temporarily managing foster care. The other two thirds of the position was dispersed to two of my co-workers. In addition to foster care, I was also delegated to be the point person to take incoming calls through the automated system regarding bullying, harassment, racism, IEP laws, and discipline.

I hold a bachelor's degree in childhood development. I am not trained as a social worker, crisis counselor or mediator for foster care issues, IEP resolution, bullying prevention or bullying law. A good amount of my time is spent forwarding calls via emails to appropriate people while trying to maintain all of the work and supervision that I have to do. Other than watching a video on foster care, I received no training or additional compensation, due to lack of funding.

Placing additional work assignments on the already full plates of MDOE employees with little support, is not best practice. In the almost 3 years that I have been in the MDOE (all of which has been during one of the most unprecedented times in education due to the onset and continuation of COVID 19), several of my colleagues have left the department to return to jobs either in Maine schools where they can earn similar pay with greater time off, or to the private sector for higher pay.

I am writing this to you to express my sincere concern with how my colleagues are contemplating, at alarming rates, the desire to leave state government service to return to the private sector because of wage disparity. The Maine Department of Education has specialized employees who are dedicated to serving Maine schools in all capacities for the greater good of our youth. At the end of the day, regardless of how rewarding the job, if we are not fairly compensated for the work we do, a pat on the back and a message of gratitude doesn't help keep us motivated the job for long.

Our highly skilled MDOE staff are leaving. We need to take a serious look at how we can turn this around. It is my responsibility to support team members so that they can do what they are experts at, and that's supporting students and schools and making sure that Maine schools are safe. If I can't get my work done, then the teams can't do their work. I will continue to advocate for this work but I also ask that we also be seen, cared for and valued for the work that we do every single day for the betterment of all Maine people in our schools and communities.

Thank you.

Staci Warren

Smithfield, Maine

May 12, 2023

Senator Nangle, Representative Stover, members of the Committee on State and Local Government,

My name is Ronnette Partridge, I have worked for the state of Maine for almost 17 years. I have been married for 33 years and I have 6 children. I work for the Maine Department of Health and Human Services in Disability Determination Services. I am testifying on my own time as a private citizen in support of LD 1854, An Act to Complete and Implement the Comprehensive Review of the Classification and Compensation System for Executive Branch Employees, sponsored by Representative Drew Gattine.

I started working for the state of Maine in May 2006 I started as a Disability examiner in the Pro Tech Salary Scale grade 20. When I started the minimum wage was \$6.75 my starting wage was \$13.75, \$7.00 above minimum wage. Today the minimum wage is \$13.80 and the pay grade I started at is \$18.94, only \$5.14 above minimum wage. Some McDonalds locations are hiring unskilled crew members at \$18.00 per hour.

Some years ago, the state did a wage analysis clearly showing state employees are underpaid, in the intervening time state wages have not gone up all that much. They certainly have not kept up with the cost of living nor have the upper pay scales been adjusted to keep in line with the increases in the minimum wage.

Our office, DDS, is contracted with the federal government adjudicating Social Security Disability Claims for Maine residents. We currently have 35 case deciders. The work is highly skilled and takes years to learn the process and policies are constantly changing, and it requires a dynamic workforce to adjudicate accurate and timely disability decisions for the people of Maine.

When I started here, all case deciders had to start as Disability Examiners and after a year they could apply to promote to a Disability Adjudicator. Due to staff retention challenges our Director has worked with DHHS and HR and eliminated the Disability Examiner line from our office and promoted all case deciders regardless of skill level from Examiners to Adjudicators. They have further taken to starting new employees at step 4 of the pay scale instead of step 1. This has left our long-term employees demoralized and somewhat upset. We have one employee that has been here 7 years and she is now making the same amount as new hires. This is discouraging as experienced and highly skilled staff are paid close to that of unexperienced and unskilled staff.

We here at Disability Determination services definitely have a hiring and retention problem. Of our 35 case deciders we only have 8 that have been here more than 7 years, and the rest have 3 years or less. Since 11/2020, we have lost 27 Examiners and Adjudicators, most of who were new employees that did not stay long.

The sad part of all of this is that being 100% federally funded, the federal government has offered more money for wages to improve retention, but the state has said no because we cannot make more than other employees in the DHHS pay scales. Disability adjudication for social security is very different from other state programs and Maine Disability Determination Adjudicators should be compensated fairly and appropriately.

The sad part is that Maine is going to lose workers to other states that pay more and have better climates. 43.9% of Maine's population is 50 and older, 20.6% are 19 or younger. 35.4% are between 20-49. Many companies are scrambling for

workers and many of Maine's restaurants already close early due to lack of staff.

MAINE needs to take immediate action with increased and competitive pay to attract and retain a talented workforce to best serve our citizens. Please support LD 1854.

Mackenzie Lee
DHHS
LD 1854

Testimony

Being a section supervisor for the Health and Environmental Testing Lab, my job is leading analysts to serve the people of Maine by providing the highest quality of testing possible.

Currently I strive to improve analysis efficiency, and data integrity, but one obstacle I face daily is employee un-satisfaction caused at the core by compensation. Our most valuable asset is our analysts at the lab. They have the experience and education required to perform the skills in the lab. But, other than kind words, the most obvious way to demonstrate that is what the State of Maine values is paying or experts what they are worth.

When employees feel undervalued, and are in a chronically understaffed departments, they leave for a place that will compensate them for their experience and education. If the department cannot keep experienced employees, valuable resources have to be used to hire, train, and equilibrate the new employees to the work, leaving gaps for other employees to pick up. The issue of underpaying employees is a cyclical issue that affects everyone.

I have employees who went to college for the work we do in our section, love the work they perform for the lab, and are great employees, but, they would be able to provide better for their family financially working in an unskilled position at a retail store. Another employee is not making enough money to ever be approved for a private loan.

I am trying to build a community in our section of scientists who care about the work we do for the community, and who support each other professionally, but that is next to impossible if we cannot pay enough to keep people at the department. Are we doing enough? Can we do better providing for our employees in turn making our departments less susceptible to turnover and low morale?

I am writing in regards of our contract negotiations. I am an 18 year employee for the state and enjoy my job. When I first started with the Ferry Service, my pay was not of industry standard, however the lower cost of benefits helped out way these issues for me. Over the years the pay has increased but also so has the cost of our benefits and recently the cost of living has gone out of control. As a licensed Marriner, 1600 ton Master, I am in charge of one of the most expensive pieces of equipment that the state owns, and I carry the most precious cargo that any vessel can carry, people. The Captains and crew provide safe passage in all types of weather, fog, wind, snow for example.

Over the past few years we have been battling constantly with crewing shortages. One classification will fill up then another set will not have enough. We have been told by HR that since all the boats have full time Captains, we do not have a Captain issue. We do have Captains that have had a hard time getting reliefs for vacations and are close to losing their vacation time due to shortages of manpower. I find it very unfair that Able Seaman and Engineers received ample increases to their pay and are able to receive a retention bonus just for showing up to work. The Captains were offered a bonus if we worked three 80 hour work rotations, this means being home 1 week a month, not caring about the home life of my fellow Captains.

In the past, I have helped many times to make sure that the boats would keep running. I would fill in at any position that I am licensed for the sake of the islands we represent to maintain service. Not just me, many of the Captains would do the same, but we are not worthy of the same treatment. I am in favor of anybody receiving increases to their pay, I just want to be treated equally considering my personal efforts and the efforts of the other Captains. Dedication to my job and to the Island communities has been of utmost importance to me and I hope you can see that, we are not normal DOT employees, pay and treat us accordingly, do your research and see our worth! Please support our proposals! Aaron Sheridan, Captain, Maine State Ferry Service

This pay gap thing has created a lot of stress in my home life as well as my work life. With what the state starts out for pay for so many of the departments within the state makes no sense. First we can't find and hire qualified help with a starting pay lower than say at a McDonalds. And promoting in a department is just as bad. How can, for instance say we have 2 Executive Housekeepers for a department because there's never been a upgrade and one makes less than the Building Custodians and the Housekeeper II they Supervise, and both having the same job responsibilities. It all just seems so unfair and frustrating to say the least. Especially after investing so much of your life in a department and finding out financially it would take the rest of your life to even get to a point where you could retire with even just 3 of your highest years being your lowest compared to any other job not in the state government.

It's affected my mental and physical health and well being to think that I started working for the State of Maine February 1st 2016 as a Institutional Custodian pay grade 5 at 10.44 a hour. When I decided to go for the Housekeeper II position I was making \$12.63 a hour. I got the Housekeeper II position and thought I'd be making more money. But when I found out that I was starting out at only \$14.10 a hour and I wasn't even going to be making as much as some of my Institutional Custodians that I was now Supervising even at pay grade 10. When I questioned it I was told not to worry because HR does the 5% rule. and then on top of that I started paying for my insurance. At the end of this position I was making only \$15.41 a hour! That's 41 cents more then some of my Building Custodians under me. So again I applied for a higher position and got it. Now I am a Executive Housekeeper Supervisor for the whole Eastside complex, at pay grade 16. At first I thought they made a mistake with my starting pay at \$16.37. So now I'm a Executive Housekeeper Supervisor pay grade 16 at \$17.02 a hour and making less then most of my Building Custodians and Housekeeper II with more responsibilities!!!! I am told it was because each time I went for a new position I missed my merit raises. So if I'd stayed an institutional I would be making more money??? And on top of all this no one could tell me who was at what steps in the pay grades I was in until I got my

Doreen Davis
LD 1854

current position and asked HR. No one even pointed me in the right direction when I asked they didn't know. Please fight for us and close this pay gap please!

Robert Leighton
Portland
LD 1854

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to you in strong support of LD 1854. As a 7 year state employee working for the Department of Environmental Protection, I've seen many folks come and go, including within my own work unit. We recently lost a valuable Planning and Research Assistant, who was working at around \$18 per hour. To put this in perspective, this person is a recent graduate who was a dual major in two STEM subjects. Meanwhile, in Portland ME we have McDonald's workers that are starting at around \$16 per hour. Even when comparing apples to apples, the average pay gap between state workers and their private sector counterparts is 15%! For some, that 15% is the difference between having to decide between paying off student loans, their credit card debt, or paying for the groceries. While working for state government gives many of us a sense of purpose and fulfillment, working on behalf of the people of Maine shouldn't come with a deep financial cost. As someone with a background in Economics, if you don't provide a wage commensurate with talent and experience, then talent will continue to leave state government for the private sector, including in other states. Think of closing the wage gap as an investment in ALL Maine workers, and remind us that hard work and talent should be rewarded. Invest in the future of all Mainers!

Sincerely,
Robert Leighton

Jessica Caron
Department of Education
LD 1854

Please continue to work to fund our state employees! I absolutely love my job and am so proud to represent the state and support the children of Maine in my role. As a young woman in my 30s, I grew up in Maine and want to start a family here. The only piece that gives me pause is the pay here in Maine compared to the benefits and pay I can receive elsewhere.

In my particular state branch, I find the workloads do not match the pay and know that a similar role in another neighboring state would mean more financial stability. Please check out the work classification study that digs more deeply into this issue: bit.ly/2020MarketStudyReport.

It sometimes feels like Maine does not prioritize attracting employees for the long term by working to redesign systems around current employee needs and remove systemic barriers to enable workers to build a balanced family life. In general, I feel torn between the mission and purpose of my current role and the financial stability and work-life balance I could achieve in a different organization/ state. Two working parents are essential to make ends meet these days.

At the top of my mind is my growing concern that the state pay scale has not and will not keep up with the rising costs of housing and inflation. Please consider investing in state employees and fighting against the years of cuts and wage stagnation to ensure that it is financially viable and accessible for a working woman to raise a family without fear of instability in the back of her mind. Thank you for listening and please continue to invest in our public institutions!

Good morning Senator Nangle, Representative Stover and members of the Committee on State and Local Government. My name is Dawn West and I am here on my own time and volition to speak in support of LD1854.

I would like to encourage you to support LD1854 and to help close the pay gap. Closing the pay gap would not only benefit the morale of employees across the state, but would aid in retention and recruitment. I had heard prior to coming to work for the state, the state did not pay well. You know what? They were right. I am fairly new to working for the state, only having come on board December of last year. I took a pay cut to come here. Think about that a pay cut. I had reasons for taking the decrease in pay to have a better home /work balance. This is important as we all know to distress and unwind. Having worked the last 6 years in long term care home/work balance was a very difficult thing to find.

As a result of taking the pay cut to come here I have had to take on a part time job to make up the difference in pay. I am lucky as I do not have children and can do so. There are many families who work for the state who do not have that option. I know an increase in pay would ease the burdens of many and allow me to have true home/life balance. I can only say that if it is beneficial for one would it not for all? Think of the moms who could stay home at night with their children, or take them to school in the morning instead of rushing out the door to take advantage of the little overtime that is available to get an extra boost in their paycheck.

Now let us consider the boost in morale. I know in my short term in the office I have heard many people say "We do not get paid enough." Giving the staff an increase to make them even with their co-workers across the country would make the employees feel appreciated instead of overworked and underpaid. To put the importance of closing the pay gap into perspective, we have a lady who works in our office who did the exact same job as she does now in a different state. This other state was paying her almost 10 dollars more an hour when she left to move to Maine. She has been employed I think around 5 years now. This is why the comprehensive pay studies are so important. We are not asking for the world just to catch up to the rest of the country. Pay gaps are being address across all types of work environments and it is time Maine did the same. It only seems fitting with the state of the economy and the ability of others to close their pay gaps that ours should be addressed as well.

I am asking you to please consider supporting LD 1854 to make Maine better and let us live by Maine the way life should be. Thank you for your time.

Matthew Simpson
Portland
LD 1854

Senator Nangle, Representative Stover, members of the Committee on State and Local Government, I'm Matthew Simpson. I am here on my own time to speak in support of LD 1854.

I am a Public Health Nurse with the Maine CDC, and my home office is in Portland. Our Portland Team is responsible for both Cumberland and York Counties. Public Health Nurses go into our communities throughout the State and provide Mother/Baby Prenatal and Postpartum assessments, education, and supplies; we assist State Epidemiologists and TB State Consultants in preventing the spread of tuberculosis and assisting with its eradication from our State; we provide primary pediatric vaccines to our children in Maine who have barriers to access. Vaccinations we provide not only protect our patients, the children of Maine, but they also protect our communities from preventable diseases.

We are the first responders in providing vaccines in health emergencies and outbreaks. We provide free, licensed professional service and care to the most vulnerable Mainers in both urban and rural settings. In the Portland Office we have nine Public Health Nursing Positions with a Supervisor Position: currently we are a team of two RNs with no supervisor. In fact, we have not had a Portland Supervisor for a year. It is common knowledge that the healthcare field has been struggling through and after the global pandemic, but the State of Maine Public Health Nursing Salaries are a major obstacle in recruiting and retaining staff. I am not lying when I tell you I get at least 2-3 job offers daily from recruiters offering \$2500-3500/ week with benefits. In my current salary position I make \$1300/week. Even other healthcare facilities in Maine offer sign-on bonuses from \$5,000-\$20,000 in addition to their higher salaries.

With an influx of New Mainers, with Primary Care being a rarer resource in rural parts of our state, Public Health Nursing is needed now more than ever. We are a dedicated group of nurses that should make Maine proud. However, we need more RNs, and low salary is the major barrier for the recruitment of Public Health Nurses in Cumberland and York Counties. I ask you to pass LD 1854. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Testimony in support of LD 1854 – the compensation and reclassification legislation

May 12, 2023

Senator Nangle, Representative Stover, members of the Committee on State and Local Government, my name is Gary R. Brooks from Dedham and I'm writing on my own time as a member of my union, MSEA, and as a private citizen in support of LD 1854, An Act to Complete and Implement the Comprehensive Review of the Classification and Compensation System for Executive Branch Employees, sponsored by Representative Drew Gattine.

I work as a Building Custodian for the Maine Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management. I'm here today to tell you that State of Maine workers have been underpaid for years and it's past time our wages are raised so 1) we can catch up with the rising cost of living and 2) so we are paid fairly compared to everyone else doing similar work throughout New England.

I have 20 years of experience as a custodian. Three other custodians and I clean 20 buildings daily. We cannot live on \$17.54 an hour! The four of us are really hurting. We like are jobs and aren't going anywhere, but our pay cannot stay flat while everything around us skyrockets out of sight. I should not have to find another job to survive. When I told my State Representative, Micky Carmichael, about our low pay, he asked me: Why is the pay so low and how are you living on half-pay?

Everybody knows we've been falling further and further behind, but the State still hasn't done enough about it. The State two years ago, in 2020, released a report showing State workers are on average paid 15 percent less than their public and private sector counterparts throughout New England. If you haven't read that report, I think you should read it. It's online at (<https://legislature.maine.gov/doc/5615>).

As a Building Custodian, my paycheck is eaten up the cost of living and circumstances beyond my control. We need higher wages. My power bill as a single person has gone up a lot because the PUC raised my kilowatt rate. With a \$820 monthly house payment there's not much left for everything else, so we custodians at the Guard base, all of us workers, every one of us, need higher wages.

Right now the State has a budget surplus, so I'm asking you to fund a State budget that ends the State Employee Pay Gap. You should also know it's the low wages for State workers that is making it hard for the State to recruit and retain workers. Funding a State budget that ends the State Employee Pay Gap will go a long way toward making sure the services are there that Maine people count on every day. Thank you.

Gary R. Brooks
Dedham, Maine

May 12, 2023

Senator Nangle, Representative Stover, members of the Committee on State and Local Government, my name is Amelia Lyons. I am writing as a private citizen and on my own time in support of LD 1854, An Act to Complete and Implement the Comprehensive Review of the Classification and Compensation System for Executive Branch Employees, sponsored by Representative Drew Gattine.

I have the distinct honor and privilege of working for the Maine Department of Education, formally as a state employee since 2018 and as a contractor since 2013. The work that this department does is truly vital and some of the most important work in our state. My colleagues are dedicated leaders in the profession, and move mountains every day to do what's best for Maine's children. I am regularly in awe of the strength, compassion, and tenacity of my colleagues, as they support the critical infrastructure of public education in our state.

This is why I write to you to say, I am devastated by how many of my skilled colleagues have left state government service in the past few years. At the end of the day, the wages do not compare. Colleagues have reluctantly left their dream jobs at the state, for other positions that pay 50% more and have a school year schedule. Folks who have years of historical knowledge and context for the department - something that is few and far between, and so crucial - are realizing it's not worth it to continue working at these salary levels given their expertise.

When someone puts in their notice at the department, it can take many months to refill that position. Many months of others taking on their workload, hours of reviewing applications, preparing, conducting, and evaluating interviews. Our work and our morale suffer when we face long gaps without essential staff in our department. This means time taken away from our important duties supporting Maine schools and students. If the State of Maine could close the well-documented wage gap, I know there are many who would choose to stay - because this work is so fulfilling, and it is a privilege to be a public servant. But if we're asked to do these complex, difficult jobs without adequate pay or support, we cannot blame our colleagues when they find a better offer.

I sincerely appreciate your attention to this matter and am available if you have any questions.

Amelia Lyons
Topsham, ME

Testimony of James Bailey

In Support of LD 1854, An Act to Complete and Implement the Comprehensive Review of the Classification and Compensation System for Executive Branch Employees, Sponsored by Representative Drew Gattine

May 12, 2023

Senator Nangle, Representative Stover, members of the Committee on State and Local Government, I'm James Bailey, a licensed social worker employed at Dorothea Dix Psychiatric Center and president of the Maine Service Employee Association Local 1989 chapter that represents the hospital. I am submitting this testimony on my own time in support of LD 1854 and to highlight the needs of the hospital.

Consider that the average length of a medical hospital stay is about 4.5 days, whereas a typical commitment at our state psychiatric hospitals is measured in months. The consistency of staffing in a psychiatric hospital, with patients that have been hospitalized months and sometimes years, is of vital importance to the functioning of the hospital. In previous supplemental budgets, money has been appropriated to DDPC to fund expenses related to travel nurses. The frequent turnover of staff – especially nurses, but also therapeutic staff, clinical staff, recreational staff, and more – makes our jobs not only more difficult, but more dangerous. A patient that doesn't trust their staff in a state hospital is a patient that has a higher risk of violence due to their mental illness.

You are likely well acquainted with the increase in violence against healthcare workers in emergency departments both across the state and the country. Every employee at both state hospitals, regardless of position, must train to physically restrain violent and unsafe patients against walls for emergency medication administration, to use non-restrictive blanket wraps to safely seclude, and place them in a multi-point restraint chair if they persist in unsafe behavior. Not only is one's training important in these unfortunate events, but trusting that those working with you are equally trained and prepared is essential. Frequent turn-over erodes that trust. Staff being mandated to work past their shift end time due to poor staffing erodes that trust. Nickel-and-diming staff compensation and benefits erodes that trust.

Dorothea Dix Psychiatric Center and Riverview Psychiatric Center need consistent staffing across the board to keep the staff safe and the patients safe. Money invested in travel nursing and contracted employees should be invested in the staff committed to the hospitals, the state, and the people they serve. Please ensure that the State seriously address the known 15% average pay gap across state employees with regional peers, please ensure that the State prioritize the safety of their staff and patients, please ensure that the State operates the hospitals with equity, opportunity, and fairness.

Please support LD 1854. Thank you for your time and consideration and feel free to follow-up with any questions you may have.

May 12, 2023

Senator Nangle, Representative Stover, members of the Committee on State and Local Government, I'm Anthony Holzhauser and I'm testifying on my own time in support of LD 1854, An Act to Complete and Implement the Comprehensive Review of the Classification and Compensation System for Executive Branch Employees, sponsored by Representative Drew Gattine.

I work for the Department of Marine Resources: Bureau of Sea Run Fisheries as a seasonal employee from April to Oct, and then as a contract from Dec to April. I have been with Sea Run for 4 years now, and I feel like I have a unique perspective relating specifically to retention of staff and a pay gap. The crew that I work with in the summertime stocks river herring and shad, conducts beach seine surveys, and attempts to tag striped bass. In order to train someone how to operate a stocking truck, boat, trailer, etc. properly and safely it takes pretty much a whole field season, maybe even two. If we want to split our crews up into two teams to tag and seine, we need to be able to trust that each crew will be safe and know what to do. Every year, we lose one, two, or sometimes all three members of our field crew because they're not getting paid enough, have no benefits, and/or don't want to work seasonally. Receiving more money in our budget could help with creating some year-round positions for these people. This, in turn, will help us to monitor our state's sea run fish with more accuracy and care.

I have recently also been looking at other options in the public and private sector. I love what I do with sea run fisheries, and my family is also proud of what I have helped to accomplish. But, when I tell anyone what I make, it kind of becomes embarrassing. I feel as though I'm not making what I am worth for the work I do, and it is not a pleasant feeling. ANY job that I can find in the public and/ or private sector starts at more than I currently make, will provide me with full benefits and a paycheck year-round. I don't want to leave my position, but I'm starting to feel as though I have to if I want to still be able to provide for my family.

I know this is a short testimony, but I care enough about this that I felt like at least if I could find time to write anything then it would be worth it. I hope you consider my testimony when making your decision. Thank you for your time.

May 12, 2023

Senator Nangle, Representative Stover, members of the Committee on State and Local Government,

My name is Kerem Gungor. I am a senior environmental engineer at DEP Bureau of Land Resources. I am writing this testimony to express my personal experience with engineer recruitment and share my personal thoughts with the Committee in support of LD 1854, An Act to Complete and Implement the Comprehensive Review of the Classification and Compensation System for Executive Branch Employees, sponsored by Representative Drew Gattine.

I am currently supervising two environmental engineers and one assistant environmental engineer. I have two vacancies in my team: one environmental engineer, one assistant environmental engineer. The Bureau of Land Resources relies on my team's technical expertise to ensure that the land development projects are permitted in compliance with the state's stormwater regulations so that their impact on Maine's waters is mitigated.

Since I assumed this supervisory position in March 2022, I tried to recruit for the vacant environmental engineer position which requires the successful candidate to have a "professional engineer" license issued by the State Board of Licensure for Professional Engineers. None of the applicants was qualified for the position; hence, we could not move forward with interviews and fill the position. Unfortunately, this is a common occurrence. Before I assumed the senior environmental engineer position, the Bureau attempted to hire an environmental engineer. This attempt was also unsuccessful. Non-competitive salary is a major reason hampering recruitment. I must note that DEP provides 11% stipend on top of the base pay for the engineers. Even the pay augmented with this stipend does not attract qualified professionals. The management has recently decided to replace the vacant environmental engineer position in my team since the likelihood of filling an assistant environmental engineer position is higher than that of a full engineer.

Another evidence that demonstrates the non-competitive nature of the current pay schedule is as follows: successful candidates almost always negotiate to start at a higher step since Step 1 pay offered to new employees by policy is too low for most candidates to accept. Supervisory staff like me allocate a significant amount of their time into employee recruitment efforts and find themselves unable to fill vacancies due to the pay gap which is beyond their control. I believe that it is past time to address the pay gap and re-adjust the base pay schedules to eliminate the need for stopgap measures like providing stipends for the engineers.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide my personal testimony on this important issue.

Respectfully submitted,
Kerem Gungor
Oakland

My name is Dorothy Smith, I live in Fairfield, and I'm writing on my own time in support of LD 1854. I am an eligibility specialist in the Skowhegan office. When I started there in May 2017, we had a full office. That is no longer the case. We are pretty much at half capacity. That means more work for everyone, including the supervisors. We keep getting asked to add more duties to our work, such as requesting SAVE for non-citizens, importing documents into DocuWare, etc. When we do hire new people, we wonder if they are going to stay or go somewhere else. The training takes way too long. It was 5 months when I started. Now it's 1 year. By the time people got out of training and have to do the real work, they don't want to do it anymore. What a waste of time and money! A better selection process of potential employees and a better training schedule is needed. I am a widow and my children are grown, so the only impact is on me. The more work that's added on equals more stress.

Another point I forgot to bring up is this. I reached the top of my paygrade a year ago & I plan to work 2 more years. So, no merit pay raises for me for 3 years! Is that FAIR? NO! I am an excellent worker & deserve to be rewarded for it. Please pass and fund LD 1854.

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

Senator Nangle, Representative Stover, members of the Committee on State and Local Government,

My name is Connor Smith and I am testifying on my own time. I am a Procurement Analyst II for DAFS, the State Department responsible for overseeing every purchase made by State of Maine Agencies.

I am here today to discuss the importance of increased funding to both our agencies and our workforce. Staffing shortages are going to become an increasing problem over the coming years, and significant funding is the only way to combat the issue. An aging workforce is going to see a substantial increase in vacancies, vacancies that will not be filled at the current pay rates. My department alone is seeing two retirements within the next six months. These retirees are public servants who have taken on significantly more work than their roles would normally require, because 30 years of experience provides expertise that cannot be taught over night to new hires.

The cost of living, especially rental prices, have skyrocketed throughout the state of Maine over the last few years. One-bedroom apartments under \$1,500 a month are few and far between, and rarely in places people want to live let alone start a family. To be frank, I am only able to work for the State because my education was paid for through military service.

The current pay gap has become so extreme that there will be no hiring college graduates struggling with student loans on top of the increased price of living. The phrase "do more with less" will not fill positions or allow workers to keep up with demands as people leave for well-deserved retirements.

Turnaround times within my department are expected to be within five days for RFPs, RFAs, or selection packages – something we feel is necessary to keep our government functioning. It is difficult to see how our department, or any department, can continue to provide timely service when our workforce continues to downsize and positions cannot be filled by qualified workers do to the pay gap. Raises that fail to meet interest rates are not raises, but pay cuts. As things currently stand, State employment is not an avenue to the middle class, but a sentence to live pay check to pay check.

Recruitment and retention need to be the primary focus of the State if they intend to continue functioning while dealing with the retirement of one of the oldest work forces in the nation.

I appreciate your time and consideration and hope that the wellbeing of those who have dedicated their lives to State service will remain a priority for you all.

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

My name is Robyn Egan and I reside in Windham, Maine. I am a retired state employee and a member of the Maine Service Employees Association.

I began my career with the Department of Corrections in 1982 and retired after 37 years of dedicated service. For 35 years, I worked as a Correctional Caseworker at the Maine Correctional Center. Being a social worker in a correctional facility had a host of challenges and increased caseloads affected my ability to provide services. My duties and responsibilities changed but my job description was not altered or updated.

I am here today to speak in favor of LD 1854, the classification and compensation bill. Prior to my retirement in 2019, I was a member of the MSEA bargaining team. We worked hard to raise wages and bring employees pay up to a level equal with the private sector. I am sad to say we were not able to accomplish this and many workers left state government. I saw a lot of changes at my worksite and in all of state service. Staff shortages and large caseloads became the norm as opposed to the exception. The staff that remained worked long hours and in many cases felt unappreciated for their service. As their workloads increased their pay did not. Vacant positions increased as well as workloads.

It is time for this to change and that is why I stand here asking you to support LD 1854. It is time that state employees are compensated for their hard work and dedication. It is time the state review and update the compensation plan, implement a market pay study and provide a comprehensive review of the classification plan.

Thank you for your time and I am available for questions.

Robyn Egan
Windham, Maine

I have three children that I support. Making the money I make now I live in constant debt. There is never any extra and we are constantly pulling money from something to catch something else up. I do not have any type of state or federal assistance. With the rise in heating oil, groceries and nearly everything else in our lives living is getting really hard. We want to work hard and be proud to support our families on our own but it is a scary world out there. It is discouraging to never be able to get ahead.

Kimberly Tarrío
Augusta

Bobbi Bard
Richmond
LD 1854

Dear Legislature's State and Local Government Committee,
I'm an ICM on the Outpatient team. The team works with little over 50 clients that have been found not criminally responsible (NCR) by reason of insanity as a result of mental disease or defect. Out of 51 NCR clients, 16 have killed one or more people and an additional 24 clients have committed other violent offenses including assault, aggravated assault, elevated aggravated assault, and attempted murder. The remaining 11 clients have committed child molestation, child pornography, visual child aggression, rape, criminal threatening, terrorizing, stalking, criminal mischief, and/or arson. We, as ICM's, are tasked with keeping the client and society safe. Team members monitor clients' compliance with their court orders, support development of client skills and independence, and assess clients' symptoms and safety. As part of these responsibilities, it is the team's duty to observe and supervise clients while they are in their homes and in the community - often while working alone and without nearby backup.

This job is not for the faint of heart and can be dangerous at times. I personally, was on the team when a client was shot in our lobby, and I have been assaulted. A while ago I was tasked to drive close to two hours to pick up a client, in his own residence, that had an increase in paranoia and was refusing medication changes. A peer and I went to get this client and to transport him back to RPC. This client is in the NCR system because he took a life. We, as ICMs, had no backup except each other and 911. I am happy to say that this client went back into the hospital without incident. But as ICMs, we never know what will happen in these types of circumstance.

I urge you to support this bill, LD 1854, and show all ICMs that the good work that we do is noticed and appreciated and is paid comparable to other New England States. This bill will at least be a start to help us get to that point.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Bobbi

Members of the Committee on State & Local Government, my name is Zach Wanberg, I live in Gardiner, and I work for the Bureau of Insurance at PFR. I'm writing on my own time in support of LD 1854. Personally, I feel like the state does a fantastic job with providing employees with benefits and livable salaries. However, these metrics are simply outdated. I believe the state cares about employee retention but with salaries severely lacking in terms of what other states pay their employees and inflation paired with cost of living in 2023...it's time to make a change. When employees are compensated based on merit, ability and comparable worth, it's a great sight. The respect alone from receiving pay increases shows a level of commitment by our superiors & legislators that can even transcend the workplace. I believe, to keep workers from leaving the state, morale and productivity to remain high, substantial wage increases are in order. Please pass and fund LD 1854 to close the pay gap.

Testimony – LD 1854
Bobbie Shay

A little over three years ago I left my job as a Police Records Technician in California and moved home to Maine. I had been wanting to return home for years so I could help my mother and enjoy “the way life should be” once more. I knew even though I would be making less at my new job as Office Associate II with the state, the cost of living was significantly less than California and thought the State's health insurance and benefits would make up for the shortfall. This of course turned out to be the beginning of COVID and the cost of living skyrocketed ever since.

After moving back, I found myself in my late 30's living once more with a parent. We thought our two paychecks would be able to cover the cost of our living. Like many others we found ourselves with the stress of living paycheck to paycheck. We both worked through the pandemic and only benefited with Governor Mill's few relief checks for everyone.

I was never an employee to complain. I take pride in my work and wanted a job I could stay at for years and thrive. I arrived in my current position with years of experience and served the citizens and visitors of Maine daily with the professionalism and friendliness that people expect from our quaint state. With my arrival, the department had more specialized expertise than it ever had before. We had made improvements to every part of our division, but my wage didn't represent the work and service I brought to the job daily.

After understanding the title of Office Associate II more, it occurred to me we were working out of class. I submitted my FJA on February 8, 2022 to get reclassified. With full support of my supervisors, it has taken me 15 months to obtain a new title. I'm one of the lucky ones. Currently I wait for the retro pay to help the cost-of-living debt incurred during the process. Since the FJA process started over a year ago, my only direct co-worker retired and I worked solo as the position was filled. It took 2 listings to fill the position. I believe the generalized job title and low pay made it difficult to fill.

Growing up as a Mainer I was taught hard work pays off. It appears that may no longer be the case. As a State of Maine employee I'm not making enough to live in today's State of Maine. Our wages can not compete with money coming from out of state. Our housing and costs of living are considered a deal for the rest of New England but simply too much for most residents. The small raises we received last year helped and were greatly appreciated but had little effect with the growing cost of winter heating and food. While waiting for the reclass I was tempted daily at the idea of finding better pay and felt like a fool for being so loyal. One day this wage gap will become too wide and many will be left with no other choice.

Closing the pay gap would be night and day in quality of life. Like many employees we're not asking to become millionaires, simple asking for enough to live and thrive. Enough money so we in turn can support our communities, small businesses and trades year round. Enough money to raise a family here. It's time to invest in the future of Maine State Employees. We're here and want to stay. Help us.

Mark Brunton
South China
LD 1854

RE: LD1854 An Act to Complete and Implement the Comprehensive Review of the Classification and Compensation System for Executive Branch Employees

Dear Legislators,

I am writing in support of LD1854. I am an employee of the Department of Health and Human Services Office of Aging and Disability Services (OADS). I have served the people of the State of Maine since May 2014 as a Caseworker, Resource Coordinator and Comprehensive Health Planner.

The work we do at OADS is essential to the health and well-being of Maine families and their loved ones. We support and enhance services to assist aging Mainers, and individuals with physical and intellectual disabilities to live, work and thrive in their communities. We also regulate and support nursing homes and other long-term care facilities to serve those Mainers who can no longer maintain health and safety independently. Many of my coworkers in Adult Protective Services investigate threats to the safety and health of the aging and disabled population. An APS caseworker is a lifeline to vulnerable Mainers to protect them from emotional, physical and financial abuse.

Like many other State of Maine agencies, OADS is experiencing a severe labor shortage with many vacancies in vital positions. Employers throughout Maine and the nation are currently experiencing similar challenges; however, the current level of unstaffed and understaffed positions in our state government is reaching the critical stage. The effects of lost productivity and the impact upon the people of Maine are becoming severe. The factors contributing to this crisis are not new and did not solely arise as a result of the COVID pandemic or current economic conditions. For more than a decade, state employees have been undercompensated in relation to our private sector counterparts. Cuts in our benefits and increases in our payroll contributions to retirement and healthcare have eroded the value of the overall compensation package. As you are aware, recent compensation studies have proven this to be so.

In addition to the erosion of compensation as compared to equivalent professions in the private sector, the classifications of state positions are outdated and obsolete. The classification system dates back to the 1970s with very few modifications or improvements. The Committee and the Legislature must consider the magnitude of the significant changes to the workforce and in the workplace in the ensuing 50 years.

State government is in serious need of modernization. LD1854 will begin the process of that modernization. The actions of this Legislature will determine the effectiveness of the delivery of government services to the people, businesses and organizations of Maine for the next 50 years. Enacting LD1854 will ensure those services are delivered by Maine workers who can support their families and contribute to the Maine economy and their communities in a sustainable way, for the future of Maine. I urge you to pass LD1854.

Sincerely,

Mark A. Brunton
MSEA-SEIU Local 1989
207-735-5428

May 12, 2023

Dear Maine Legislators,

I am writing this on my own time to inform you of the urgent need to support LD 1854 and to increase funding to the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife.

In the last 3 years at the Dry Mills State Fish Hatchery in Gray, Maine, we have had significant turnover and were shorthanded for an extended period of time.

The most difficult aspect of this is training employees just to have them leave for better pay elsewhere! Retention is at an all-time low and recruitment is very difficult at this time. I realize this is an issue all across Maine, both private and public; however, it is especially difficult when you are dealing with raising and stocking live fish for the public.

Prime examples of us losing good people are Jamie Brey and Greg Bell -- two supervisors. Jamie left to work for DOT and Greg is just leaving because he is tired of fighting with the state for more pay for him and his employees. I personally would leave also; however, I am only two and a half years away from retirement after having worked for Inland Fisheries and Wildlife for almost 35 years now.

During the pandemic, a couple years ago out of four employees here at the Dry Mills Hatchery only 2 remained for almost two months -- myself and my supervisor Greg Bell. That's just too hard on workers over 50 years old.

I feel the only way to retain our workforce is to close the pay gap between state employees and what other states pay along with the private sector. Thank you to all legislators for listening to my testimony.

Sincerely yours,

Mike Andrews

May 12, 2023

Senator Nangle, Representative Stover, members of the Committee on State and Local Government,

My name is Randy Lagasse. I live in Northern Maine and have worked in the woods most of my life. I am 58 years old and have been a state employee for 24 years. I have held a state forester position now for some time. I am writing this testimony on my own time in support of LD 1854, An Act to Complete and Implement the Comprehensive Review of the Classification and Compensation System for Executive Branch Employees, sponsored by Representative Drew Gattine.

For a long time, being a state employee meant, good benefits, defined pension retirement and a generous health care package. When I first started in 1998 health insurance was free. Now I pay \$50 per month just for myself.

Mobility in moving to and from private and public sector jobs is practically impossible once you have been vested with the state of Maine. This I consider a disadvantage for leverage of improving one's professional career. Someone told me working for the state is "like being in the mafia – you can't leave". This is an impediment that should be compensated for.

Our division, (Maine Forest Service) is uncompetitive with the private sector in our hiring process and employee retention. For example, just recently we had two great forester position openings located in the central and southern Maine area that only revealed one qualified candidate. Granted the employee market is unprecedented at this time but it shows the reluctance of the workforce considering being a public servant.

The idea of better benefits and work life balance for state employees leveled the playing field has not come to be proven. The private sector foresters are better paid, enjoy the use of company vehicles on non-work-related uses. State employees do not have that added benefit. Private company foresters have free use of company lands, camps, and equipment such as snowmobiles and ATV's. To be certain, we do not want to use these things on "time off" as that can create much controversy and problems, but fringe benefits are a major reason why the private sector is at an advantage. And they can bring their dog to work!

Throughout my entire career, I have seen the equivalent private sector more up to date on technology and peripherals and current on innovation and workflow challenges. The state has reacted to new stuff with tepidity.

And finally, State employees are public servants that must be much more cognizant in public of their opinions, cannot run for certain offices and can run into "conflicts of interest". This as well, is not compensated for.

The Compensations and Classification study proves the discrepancies and should be used to create a better state workforce. Please support LD 1854.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Randy Lagasse

May 12, 2023

Senator Nangle, Representative Stover, members of the Committee on State and Local Government,

My name is Darcey Boucher. I'm testifying on my own time, and I live in Sabattus. I have worked for the Department of Health and Human Services in the Office of Family Independence for 14 years, and I currently work as an Eligibility Specialist. My role involves working with Mainers and families to determine their eligibility for benefits provided through DHHS, such as EBT, TANF, MaineCare, etc. Please support LD 1854, An Act to Complete and Implement the Comprehensive Review of the Classification and Compensation System for Executive Branch Employees, sponsored by Representative Drew Gattine.

In my time at DHHS, I've seen the number of clients in need steadily increase each year. As more people struggle to keep up with the rising cost of housing, food, heat, medicine, childcare, and other expenses, more people are relying on Maine's social safety net and the services that we provide at DHHS. Because we are helping more people in need, caseloads have grown, which has led to stress and burnout for many staff members.

Specialists, who assist Mainers with accessing these critical benefits, are trained for roughly six months when they are first hired. But after their training, many of them will promote to a different role or simply leave the department due to the pay, large caseloads, and stress. The turnover is not sustainable and makes it harder for all of us to do our work.

If we want to keep qualified and experienced people on staff, we need to pay them more. Higher pay will help the Department with both recruitment and retention. The longer you do this work, the more experience you gain. If we were able to retain more of our staff, it would mean we could help more Mainers who are in need. It would also mean a better work/life balance for all of us, as the caseloads wouldn't be as heavy if we had more people to work them. The work that my coworkers and I do is so important to so many of our fellow Mainers; we offer stability during challenging times, a lifeline out of poverty, and a safety net for those who are down on their luck. But we need to be paid fairly for the work we do and we need to invest in making sure we retain qualified staff like myself.

Thank you for your time.

May 12, 2023

Senator Nangle, Representative Stover, members of the Committee on State and Local Government,

I am submitting testimony on my own time in support of LD 1854, An Act to Complete and Implement the Comprehensive Review of the Classification and Compensation System for Executive Branch Employees, sponsored by Representative Drew Gattine.

I'd like to address the importance of funding public services and addressing continued retention issues. I have been a state employee working for DHHS for over 25 years. The importance of funding public services and retention continues to be a concern.

During my years of state service, I have seen high to impossible caseloads, lack of resources, lack of support from management, and lack of training to support the job. To continue to provide quality services, it is important to provide funding to retain and attract well qualified workers. It is important to stay competitive with the private sector. I have seen people leave because they have found jobs that have better benefits and/or salary as well as less stress due to more manageable job duties.

DHHS has been an ever-evolving system with changes in management, direction of services, changes in technology, and policy. As a state employee, this is very challenging to continue to manage on a direct-care level.

The need to adequately fund public services can make a difference in the quality, longevity of workers, the amount of experience state employees have, and attract more qualified workers.

I urge you to support LD 1854, address the pay gap in comparison to other states, adequately fund and prevent staff shortages, and ensure adequate resources such as training and technology.

Amy Hill, Augusta

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

Senator Nangle, Representative Stover, members of the Committee on State and Local Government,

I am writing to you today on behalf of myself as a private citizen in Augusta. I appreciate your committees for taking the time to consider this testimony. I work as a Title 1 Coordinator for the Maine Department of Education. As you know, it is of critical importance that the Maine DOE has the staff and resources necessary to support the varied districts and learners in our state.

It is clear to see that our decentralized school system in the US relies heavily on the capacity and initiatives that come from the state level. With departments that provide professional development, grant funding, attention and resources to underserved students, partnerships with communities, and guidance on law and instructional best practices, the Maine DOE deserves to be funded in a way that enables a strong statewide education system.

Please consider the immense impact a strong, resourced, and staffed Maine DOE would have on the districts, schools, educators, families, and students in this state. I urge legislators to continue to invest in our learning systems that begin and end with the health and wellbeing of the Maine Department of Education.

Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony.

Rita Pello
Augusta, ME

My name is Lasca Black, I live in Augusta and I work at Riverview Psychiatric as an RN. I am writing on my own time in support of LD 1854, An Act to Complete and Implement the Comprehensive Review of the Classification and Compensation System for Executive Branch Employees.

I have been here ten years and frequently want to leave because this is a VERY dangerous place to work as you can imagine. The big problem is that we cannot keep our nurses, so we end up chronically understaffed or using expensive travel nurses who can only do half of what we do. They get paid A LOT more and we work harder because we have to pick up all their slack. That makes no sense. Additionally, most of us do not want to work so many hours. We can go to Maine General and make the same base pay and get paid for 40 hours for a 36 hour week. Here we work 36 hours one week and 43.25 the next... plus mandates and overtime that we pick up because we are short so often. We wouldn't get so burned out if we had an option of working 36 hours and we might get more staff if there were an option of part time work of some sort. Due to position numbers being low for full time staff, they don't let us veer from full time... some just don't want full time or cannot do it, so we lose opportunities for staff due to this issue.

As far as pay goes. Too much of our pay is put into stipends, even when the legislature proposes it be base pay, we end up with a stipend. Every time I get a raise, I get a raise on my base pay, but stipends are a third of my pay. Why work in a dangerous, understaffed place where you feel underappreciated and underpaid? The current culture in America is to live harder, not work harder... I think you all know that. At RPC we simply work harder with no other options and not enough pay to make it worth our while knowing we can be put out of work at any moment due to severe injuries and PTSD from their occurrence. Unless you work here and do what we do, it is hard to imagine what we go through.

I implore you to pay us with BASE pay that at the very least makes it hard for us to leave and attracts people to come here. Honestly, money is where it's at in a place like this, because it is often an ungrateful job. Closing the pay gap between RPC nurses and nurses working in other private & public sector jobs would go a long way toward recruiting and retaining staff. I also ask that someone consider sponsoring a 36 hour work week for 40 hours of pay for those nurses that want to take advantage of it. I see that as a great benefit. Thank you for your time.

Dear members of the Committee on State and Local Government, my name is Katharine Rehm, I live in Augusta, and I'm writing on my own time in support of LD 1854.

I've been working for the state for 7 years. I hit my pay cap in the middle of COVID. My husband also works for the state, he's been here for over ten years and has also hit his pay cap. We have a 3 year old and a 10 month old. We pay a mortgage and have two vehicles that we make payments on. I have student loans. Prices have gone up on groceries, clothing, over the counter medicine, diapers, formula, toiletries, you name it. The cost of daycare, propane to heat our home, electricity, and other utilities and services have also risen. We used to be able to afford to live and stay well above water, we even had savings tucked away. But throughout the pandemic with all of the rising costs, and no raises or pay increases of any kind, we're barely treading water. It's nearly impossible for either of us to promote within state work, because the only types of jobs that are offered above our level are management, or require a degree in the field of expertise, for example social worker roles get paid more but you need to have a social work background or a degree. I went to art school. My husband did not get the opportunity to go to college because he was forced to raise his younger siblings for a few years (with no help from the state! It was a 'foster care' situation but he was put into a corner and because he was family they told him he could not be compensated for any of it). I digress. We receive emails for 'training opportunities' such as classes to help us be able to promote within DHHS, but it requires supervisor approval. The supervisor never approves of it because we are so short-handed. So we're not even able to take a 2 hour CLASS that will help us get a foot in the door of a higher paying job WITHIN the department, because of operational need. How is that fair? The only reason either of us continues to work for DHHS, is because we make just enough money that we do not qualify for SNAP or Medicaid. So if we left, we would lose our health insurance and be forced to apply for marketplace health insurance with very high deductibles. We're part of the 'middle class' but it's felt more like 'lower class' without all of the help from the state that our clients are receiving. We weren't offered help with heating expenses, we were not given stipends, we were not given maximum food stamp allotments, etc. We still struggle to make ends meet and barely live paycheck to paycheck. We have to put all of our medical bills into a third party account and make small payments on it. We don't get to travel or go on vacations. We might have to take second jobs pretty soon. When I took the job for the state 7 years ago, I was so happy and excited because I could officially quit my THREE jobs that I was working at that time to make ends meet, and I didn't even have kids then. I was finally able to get a FULL TIME job with decent pay and health insurance. Now I'm back where I started!! CLOSE THE PAY GAP!! Also, we shouldn't have to work OVERTIME in order to cover the work that we're supposed to complete during a regular 40 hour work week. Other states offer better pay along with benefits and health insurance for the SAME POSITION that I currently work in. The same states have relatively the same cost of living expenses. We are likely going to move out of state if we don't see a change happen soon. Then you'll be losing TWO state employees who have invested 7 and ten + years of dedication and hard work into DHHS OFI. We are starting to feel like numbers and not people anymore. We are starting to feel like we don't

matter, that the only people in Maine that matter are the low income clients we serve. We deserve to be respected, protected and PAID a fair wage for the hard work we do. Please pass LD 1854 and close the state employee pay gap!