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Testimony of Rep. Deqa Dhalac introducing
LD 2152, An Act to Allow Equitable Compensation of Certain Board Members
Before the Joint Select Committee on State and Local Government

Senator Nangle, Representative Stover and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government, I am Deqa Dhalac, representing House District 120, part of the City of South Portland and the village of Springvale. I am before you today to present **LD 2152, An Act to Allow Equitable Compensation of Certain Board Members**. I bring this bill to you today to help clarify the process for authorizing compensation for folks serving on state appointed boards and commissions.

I have served on many boards throughout my life and have found the experiences to be incredibly rewarding. But I recognize the privilege I have that allows me to spend so much time and energy doing this work on a volunteer basis. Not everyone is able to devote unpaid time in this way. Yet it is often those individuals who cannot afford to take time off from work or away from family members whose voices are so badly needed in these positions. Particularly when these boards and advisory councils are established by and for the people of this state, it is important that a diverse range of perspectives are included.

When I was asked to serve on the State's Health Equity Advisory Council in 2022, I was honored to accept. The nature of that appointment was to examine ways the Office of Population Health Equity conducts its work to ensure that it is done in a responsive and inclusive manner and that its programming is reflective of community needs. We were lucky to have such a crosscutting group appointed to that council. However, it was through this experience, and the resulting confusion that arose around if and how compensation for our time could be authorized, that the need for this bill became apparent.

LD 2152 presents an elegant solution. Without incurring more expense, this bill proposes to authorize a given department to provide reasonable compensation to folks who participate on an advisory board. This authorization does not direct the department to compensate participants, but it allows the commissioner to do so when possible and when doing so can fall within existing

resources. Currently, departments do not have the authority to provide such compensation even if they wanted to.

When we are asking people to lend their time to the State of Maine, when they are taking time off of work or away from their duties to care for a loved one, we ought to be able to compensate them appropriately.

Thank you for the opportunity to introduce this legislation. And thank you to Rep. Stover for presenting on my behalf.