



# HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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*Testimony of Representative Drew Gattine presenting*  
**LD 2121, An Act to Address Chronic Underfunding of State Government Positions**  
*Before the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government*

Senator Nangle, Representative Stover and my distinguished colleagues on the State and Local Government Committee, my name is Drew Gattine and I am honored to represent parts of Saco, Scarborough and Westbrook in the Maine House. I am pleased to appear before you this morning to present **LD 2121, An Act to Address Chronic Underfunding of State Government Positions.**

This bill is a follow up to legislation that was before this committee last session that resulted in language that was ultimately included in the state budget. It is part of a long-standing effort to make sure that we are giving our state workers the support, recognition, opportunity and compensation that they deserve. It is also a “good government” bill recognizing that when one in six state positions are unfilled that something is dramatically wrong and Maine people will not be able to receive the level of service that they are entitled to from their government.

Last year when I presented LD 1854 before this committee, I recounted the story of what it was like when I came to work for the state in the aftermath of the 1991 state shutdown and the demoralizing effect that had on state employee morale. Budgets were balanced on the backs of state employees and salaries for state workers lagged behind those in the private sector. Much of that is still true today and we can't let it continue.

Earlier today you received a report back from the administration related to the Report and Recommendations of the Maine State Government Classification and Compensation Plans Study. This report was required by section UUU-3 of the state budget. The budget (section UUU-4) further requires that this report provide the starting point for good faith negotiations between the executive branch and its employees “on the implementation of the recommendations to close the pay gaps between employees of this State and public and private employees performing comparable work in this State, other New England states and other states as appropriate.”

I think we should all be looking forward to these negotiations and the results. This bill, in addition to giving the legislature important information on vacancies and recruiting efforts, will create an account to fund the new classification and compensation system and close the pay gap.

Maine has an amazing workforce. People who are well educated, highly skilled, experienced and driven to deliver the best possible service to Maine people. Our workforce is diverse but the common thread is a passion for public service. As I testified last year and as you will hear today, the workforce shortage that we are experiencing statewide hits our state workforce particularly hard. As people retire or leave state service for other reasons, Maine has historic levels of vacancies. But the work that needs to get done doesn't go away and the demands don't shrink and the great people we have are being forced to do more with less.

This bill is an opportunity for us as lawmakers and policymakers to double down on our commitment to making sure that state workers are treated fairly and are supported and are in the best possible position to deliver the best possible service for Maine people.

Coming behind me you are going to hear testimony from workers who will tell you much more than I can about why this bill is so important. I think that you are going to find their testimony not only compelling with respect to this bill, I think you are going to find it inspiring and encouraging. I think hearing their testimony is going to make you proud of what our state workers do for Maine people each and every day.

I am happy to answer questions.

Thank you.