

February 8, 2024

Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government

Testifying in Opposition

L.D. 2121 "An Act to Address Chronic Understaffing of State Government Positions"

Senator Nangle, Representative Stover, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee of State and Local Government, my name is Michael Hein, I live in Fairfield, and I urge you to *oppose* L.D. 2121, "An Act to Address Chronic Understaffing of State Government Positions."

I oppose this bill mainly for two overriding reasons: 1) this bill is *outrageously expensive and completely unrealistic*. It is legislation which, in its current form is dead-on-arrival with both the full Legislature and the Governor's office. And 2) this bill's very premise rests on *faulty logic and misrepresentations*. It's full of lies.

The Department of Administrative and Financial Services does a great job in refuting much of the technical, substantive arguments to support this bill, so I will just agree with them: Maine State government does have some vacant positions due to macro-economic factors outside of anyone's control (like low unemployment and the crappy nature of certain jobs like snow plowing and case work).

State government having unfilled positions is nothing new nor alarming. Saddling future Legislatures and Governors' administrations with burdensome new requirements and mandates will not change this. Frankly, this bill is a bad solution in search of a non-problem. Governor Mills would never support this bill, thankfully.

But this bill will not even get that far. Even if it scrapes through a House vote, it will die on the Special Appropriations Table due to its price tag. Giving \$165,000,000 to State employees is like giving \$1,000 your loser brother-in-law. Good luck ever seeing a return on that investment. It's just throwing away good money after bad.

As a current Executive Branch State of Maine employee and, until very recently, a Maine Service Employees Association (MSEA-SEIU Local 1989) union leader myself, I can tell you definitively we state workers do not need more money. We just got a 6% raise, are expecting another 3% raise this summer, and are all getting a \$800 free-money check this month per our recently bargained 18-month contract. We are paid well, get loads of leave time, and don't even work that hard. We get a pension and many of us get free individual health insurance. Think about that.

Please do the long-suffering Maine taxpayer and everyone else a favor and reject this unnecessary, waste-of-time, political payback to the service union.

Sincerely,

Michael Hein
Fairfield