

Senator Nangle, Representative Stover, members of the Committee on State and Local Government, my name is Aaron Sheridan, from Cushing. I work as a Captain with the Maine State Ferry Service. I am here on my own time in support of LD 2121, An Act to Address Chronic Understaffing of State Government Positions.

I am a 19 year employee of 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 in weighing 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, far outpacing our wages. As a licensed Mariner, 1600-ton Master, I am in charge of one of the most expensive pieces of equipment that the state owns, roughly \$15,000,000 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 crew shortages. One classification will fill up, then another will not have enough. Recently the ferry service has had to tie up boats due to manning. We have been told by HR that since all the boats have full time Captains, we do not have a Captain manning issue. We have had Captains that have had a hard time getting reliefs for vacations and are close to losing their vacation time due to shortages of manpower. Right now, we have a vacant Captains position that has yet to be filled.

I find it very unfair that Able Seaman and Engineers have received ample increases to their pay via stipends, and were able to receive a retention bonus just for showing up to work. The captains were offered a retention 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. This could be fixed and made right if the State finally fixes our broken classification system.

In the past, I have made personal sacrifices 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, and the people who depend on us to maintain this service. This isn't only me making tough sacrifices, other Captains have to do the same, but we are not worthy of the same treatment. I am in favor of anybody receiving increases to their pay, but I think that if one employee receives a 30 % stipend and the other 3%, something is wrong, I just want to be treated equally and fairly 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 have specialized skills, licenses and experiences that we bring to the table, pay us and treat us accordingly. Please ask any nay sayers to do their research and recognize our worth! Please support LD2121! Thank you for your time.

Captain Aaron Sheridan
1600 ton Master
Cushing, Maine