



# SIERRA CLUB

## MAINE CHAPTER

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**To:** Committee on State & Local Government  
**From:** Ania Wright, Legislative & Political Specialist, Sierra Club Maine  
**Date:** February 6, 2024  
**Re:** Testimony in Support of **LD 2121: An Act to Address Chronic Understaffing of State Government Positions**

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Dear Senator Nangle, Representative Stover, and esteemed members of the Committee on Labor and Housing:

My name is Kiara Carman, I am a student at College of the Atlantic and resident of Bar Harbor, as well as a volunteer for the Sierra Club Maine Chapter. I am submitting the following testimony on behalf of Sierra Club Maine, representing over 22,000 supporters and members statewide. Founded in 1892, Sierra Club is one of our nation's oldest and largest environmental organizations. We work diligently to amplify the power of our 3.8 million members nationwide as we work towards combating climate change and promoting a just and sustainable economy. We urge the Committee to vote 'ought to pass' on LD 2121.

In order to meet our state's statutory climate and clean energy goals, we must have adequately staffed and supported government agencies and positions. Though the benefits of LD 2121 reach further than what are typically thought of as environmental concerns, our testimony will pertain to how it relates to our work as a climate justice organization. We have witnessed over and over the effects that chronic understaffing of state government positions have had on our state's abilities to carry out the basic functions of government, especially in the case of natural resource agencies. Inadequate pay has left agencies struggling to fill vacant positions and has caused them to lose valuable employees to the private sector or out of state agencies or organizations with adequate pay.

Sierra Club Maine is proud to have signed on to a joint letter, presented by the Appalachian Mountain Club on behalf of environmental and health organizations, which details the consequences of this pay gap.

The vacancy rate within the state government remains close to 16%, higher than the typical range of 9-10%, based on a recent report from the Department of Administrative and Financial Services<sup>1</sup>. For too long, agencies have carried out their legislative charge while facing challenges of inadequate funding and staffing. Without sufficient staffing at state agencies, our natural world, economy and public health suffer.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://legislature.maine.gov/doc/10708>

Young people in Maine, like myself, live in uncertainty about our futures in this state. Since I have lived here, I have experienced the effects of the climate crisis firsthand - record-breaking summer heat, storms earlier this winter that destroyed parts of my community in Bar Harbor, and now record high winter temperatures. Our state needs to be properly prepared for the climate crisis, and this requires adequate staffing of the departments that are charged with reaching our climate and clean energy goals.

Sincerely,

Kiara Carman  
Sierra Club Maine Legislative Team Member  
Bar Harbor, ME