

Senator Nangle, Representative Stover, members of the Committee on State and Local Government, I'm Lyric Deagle. I am here on my own time to speak in support of LD 2121.

I work for the DOT as a licensed civil engineer - my desk is actually about a quarter mile from this room. I am the primary designer on seven projects fixing Maine's failing and unsafe culverts, intersections, and roads and I feel like I'm making a difference every day. I really enjoy my job, and I would like to continue this work.

We've all heard Maine's transportation infrastructure is crumbling, but the structure of the MaineDOT itself is also degrading due to the lack of fair compensation offered to positions across the board. Personally, understaffing saddles me and other designers with additional projects that - in lieu of unpaid overtime - miss critical deadlines. I work closely with many other sections of Project Development who are also understaffed and the collaborative structure we depend on to deliver projects has started to break down. Project Development understands the inevitability of projects missing deadlines and guides us on which parts of Maine's infrastructure to let fall through the cracks. Some choices are easier than others, but deciding between road collapses and preventable fatal traffic accidents is both demoralizing and deeply frustrating.

When I started this job three years ago it was mentioned the person at my desk before me left for the private sector, and I can't say I blame them. On average a private sector Civil Engineer II makes 18% more than I do, and they are required to use the same design standards to do the same job I do every day.

Many of these jobs are fully remote, and the DOT simply cannot compete with the private sector for these jobs with our current wage structure. Ironically, many of the handsomely paid consultants complete almost half of DOT's Highway projects every year. This is happening and will continue if the State remains unwilling to fill their own vacancies. I'd bet it would be more affordable for the state to keep these jobs in house by offering MaineDOT workers fairer compensation than to continue this current practice of relying on outside groups. MaineDOT is already paying much higher wages to private, for-profit consultant engineering firms more to complete these projects - but not to those directly employed by the State. The money is there, but it is not going to the state's workforce. This is not efficient, and this all gets in the way of building up MaineDOT to our full potential and better deliver on our obligation to be good stewards of Maine's tax dollars and infrastructure.

By passing and fully funding LD 2121, the Maine State Legislature can give MaineDOT the resources required to do our jobs and carry out best practices is serving Maine's people, commuters, tourists, and travelers. Please support this legislation so we can recruit and retain qualified Engineers like myself. Your support for LD2121 can strengthen this Department and our ability to better take care of Maine's infrastructure.

Thank you and I'd be happy to answer any questions.

Lyric Deagle
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