

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee. Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, members of the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety. My name is Anna Massefski.

I work for the Maine Department of Public Safety, just down the road in Augusta. I'm also a union steward, and I serve on the MSEA Board of Directors. I am here on my own time to speak about staffing issues and the Executive Branch employee pay gap in LD210.

My coworkers and I go to work every day to protect the people of Maine. Not in the hot-blooded hero sense you might think of for most first responders. No, we're the ones behind the scenes, making sure that people across Maine have the same access and right to safety no matter where they are.

We license ambulances and EMS workers. We conduct background checks and issue concealed weapons permits. We investigate fires to identify or rule out arson. The dispatchers in my building answer calls from 11 out of 16 of Maine's counties.

All of this, we do while understaffed, under-resourced, and underpaid. Those dispatchers, just down the road in Augusta? They are at 50% staffing right now. That means that each one of them has to work a 16-hour shift, go home for 8 hours, and then come right back to do it again. If someone calls out? Another person get brought back in on mandatory overtime, because Dispatch has minimum staffing requirements. And meanwhile these dispatchers are paid much less than county-level dispatchers covering smaller areas around the State.

That is just one example. To his credit, our Commissioner, Michael Sauschuck, is doing his best to recognize the efforts and alleviate the challenges of the Department. But he is steering a sinking ship right now. People leave for better opportunities, and their positions stay vacant for months. I don't begrudge them that at all, but it's a real shame that the Department of Public Safety is constantly losing incredible people with huge amounts of institutional knowledge because they can't support themselves and their families if they stay.

I urge you to please help support DPS in this budget. Please don't wait until staffing levels get worse, to the point that ambulances can no longer be licensed, fires can't be investigated, or there's no one left to answer that 911 call. Please support us now, so that we can bring in the right people to do these jobs well. Please close the pay gap so that we can keep working every day to protect and serve the people of Maine. This can be done in part by rejecting the Administration's proposal to remove nearly \$44 million dollars from the State's Personnel Budget and transfer that to the General Fund, which would be used for other purposes

Thank you.