

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and members of the Labor Committee,

My name is Bob Jean from Rockland. I serve as President of MEA-Retired, an organization with a membership of nearly 5,500 retired educators statewide. Today, I am speaking in full support of LD 111- An Act to Increase the State's Share of Retired Teacher Health Insurance.

At one point in my career, there was an expectation that the State would be contributing 100% toward my health insurance. Upon my retirement, I recall being stuck on a 45% contribution for several years. Recently, we progressed to 50, 55, and 60%. Those gains in recent years are helpful, but there is still a need to step things up as we work toward the goal of 100%.

The advancement of LD 111 would be another small step in fulfilling that promise. It would be, especially, helpful to our retirees who are in their 80s and 90s who started out with meager pensions and have spent their retired lives trying to catch up.

Another group to consider are those who do not qualify for social security and, therefore, do not qualify for Medicare because all their jobs were in the field of education. I am in that group. For me, personally, a 5% and 10% further contribution from the State would mean that my monthly premium for health care would finally drop below the \$400 mark. That is a milestone that people in this sub-group would be very thrilled to see.

Yes, we have recouped some of the benefits that were drastically cut in the 2010s, but, in my opinion, we have not yet gone far enough. Retired teachers dedicated their lives to the children, families, and citizens of Maine and became a vital part of those communities. Let's take the next step toward fulfilling the promise by supporting LD 111.

Thank you for listening and thank you for all you do for the citizens of Maine.

Bob Jean- MEA-Retired President