



# Professional Fire Fighters of Maine

*Affiliated with the International Association of Fire Fighters*

**Testimony of Gerry Gay, 6<sup>th</sup> District Vice President  
Tuesday, April 22, 2025**

## **LD 1638 – “An Act Regarding Disability Retirement Benefits Under the Maine Public Employees Retirement System”**

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder and other esteemed members of the Labor Committee. My name is Gerry Gay, I served City of Sanford for 40 years as a career firefighter. I'm here to testify in support of LD 1638 as the 6<sup>th</sup> District Vice President of the Professional Fire Fighters of Maine, representing over 1,200 First Responders and their families across the State of Maine. Thank you for this important opportunity to speak on behalf of the brave men and women who serve as first responders.

I am here today to express my strong support for the bill that removes the reduction of disability retirement benefits for individuals receiving benefits from both the Maine Public Employees Retirement System (MainePERS) and the United States Social Security Act (SSA).

Under current law, a person who is receiving disability retirement benefits from MainePERS sees those benefits reduced if they are also receiving disability benefits from SSA. This policy creates an unfair financial hardship for many disabled public employees who rely on these benefits to support themselves and their families.

This bill provides crucial relief by eliminating the reduction for individuals who were receiving MainePERS disability retirement benefits as of December 31, 2024. It also ensures that these individuals are retroactively compensated for any benefits that were withheld due to the reduction, including any cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) and interest. This retroactive provision is especially important, as it addresses the financial challenges that have been imposed on these individuals over the years due to a policy that did not fully consider the needs of disabled public employees.

Furthermore, the bill eliminates the requirement for applicants to provide proof of applying for SSA disability benefits as part of their application for MainePERS disability retirement. This change removes an unnecessary bureaucratic hurdle for disabled individuals, many of whom may already be overwhelmed by the challenges of their disability and navigating multiple benefit systems.

The impact of disability is often lifelong, and for many, the financial stability provided by disability retirement benefits is essential to maintaining a basic standard of living. By passing this bill, we can correct an inequity that has placed undue stress on disabled public employees who have already sacrificed so much for the public good.

I urge the committee to support this important legislation and to stand up for the disabled public servants who have devoted their careers to serving the State of Maine. This bill will go a long way in ensuring that these individuals are treated with the dignity and respect they deserve.

Thank you for your time and I would be pleased to address any questions you may have.