

Testimony of Beth White
Maine Service Employees Association, SEIU Local 1989
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs
and the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
10am Friday, February 20, 2026, State House Room 228 and Electronically

On LD 2212, An Act Making Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2026 and June 30, 2027" (Emergency) (Governor's Bill), sponsored by Representative Drew Gattine

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, members of the Appropriations Committee, Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, I'm Beth White, Director of Politics and Legislation for the Maine Service Employees Association, Local 1989 of the Service Employees International Union. We are a labor union representing over 13,000 Maine workers, including workers at the Department of Education, Child Development Services, the State-run schools in Maine's Unorganized Territories, the Maine Community College System and workers in all three branches of Maine State Government.

While we're here today to testify neither for nor against LD 2212, the Governor's proposed Supplemental Budget, we do see some positive investments included in it. We'd also like to make recommendations for a fair supplemental budget that ensures quality public services for all Maine people and provides state workers with the respect they have earned but long been denied.

We support Part PP providing \$16.6 million to Child Development Services. The workers whom we represent at CDS provide critical services to families and newborns through age 5 who have intellectual, developmental or physical disabilities so they can make the most of their public education in Maine. These disabilities can include, but are not limited to: autism, deaf-blindness, deafness, developmental delay, emotional disturbance, hearing impairment, intellectual disability, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairment, speech and language impairment, and visual impairment. Workers at CDS provide eligible children and their families with a range of services that include speech, occupational, behavioral, physical and art therapy. Early-intervention services are provided for newborns through age 2; the public education branch of CDS focuses on ages 3 through 5. The proposed investments in Part PPP will go a long way in helping to ensure the children's needs are met.

We support Part SSS increasing minimum teacher salaries to \$45,000 after June 30, 2027, and \$50,000 after June 30, 2029. To be sure, we respectfully call on Part SSS to be amended to include both the teachers in the State of Maine Unorganized Territories (EUT) and the teachers at Child Development Services from the outset. The need for such an amendment is a matter of fairness. The teachers in Maine's Unorganized Territories and at Child Development Services deserve to be treated just like all the teachers in our public schools.

We support the proposed continued investments necessary for the State to continue providing 55% of public education costs. In addition, we support the proposed funding for Free Community College. However, it's important to note that Free Community College so far has resulted in surging enrollment at

all seven of the Maine Community College campuses. As a result, staffing issues have emerged throughout the system. There hasn't been any increase in the system's faculty with Free Community College, and wages at MCCS haven't kept up with inflation. In fact, the MCCS faculty have been working for over 16 months under an expired contract. Just as we have already testified in support of the Legislature including funding in LD 2212 to help close the state employee pay gap for the State of Maine's Executive Branch workers, we also respectfully ask you to ensure that the Maine Community College System receives the funding necessary to recruit and retain qualified staff.

Thank you and I would be glad to answer any questions.