

Good afternoon, Senator Chairs, House Chairs and Committee members. My name is Jeremiah Jordan and I am an Assistant Fire Chief at the Maine Air National Guard Fire Department in Bangor. I am here on my personal timer to speak in support of funding for LD 1236 An Act to Address Employee Retention of State Employees Who Are Firefighters at Bangor International Airport in the supplemental budget, LD2212.

I first became a firefighter at the airport in 2000. Our primary mission was initially to provide fire protection to civilian and Military aircraft on the airfield. We also had a structural firefighting commitment to the Air National Guard Base. Additionally, we provided water re-supply to the neighboring communities.

In 2015 we were provided a structural fire engine and our call volume doubled with mutual aid responses to Bangor, Hermon, Old Town and other surrounding towns. In 2024 we had 436 responses. Of these, 121 were medical and vehicle accidents, 80 Aircraft and fuel spill responses and 26 building fires.

The mission at Bangor International Airport has changed in many ways. Unfortunately, the retirement system has not. The "25 years of service and 55 years old" system was enacted in 1998. Since 1998, nearly all surrounding Fire Departments have decreased their weekly hours and modified their retirement systems to 20 years of service and 50% pensions or 25 years of service and 66% pensions. These differences make hiring and retaining firefighters at Bangor Airport difficult.

The State of Maine has adjusted retirement systems for many other high stress career fields. In 2000, the State Police retirement system was changed to 25 years of service and zero age restriction with a 50% pension. This was estimated at an **annual** cost of \$872K. In 2019, Fire Investigators and Sergeants retirement system was changed to 20 years of service and zero age restriction with a 50% pension. This was estimated at an **annual** cost of \$1.1M. Finally in 2025, LD 579 proposes changing Maine Mental Health Workers retirement system to 25 years of service and zero age restriction with a 50% pension. This is estimated **annual** cost of \$8.4M. I believe that each of these stressful career fields deserve pension adjustments.

LD 1236 An Act to Address Employee Retention of State Employees Who Are Firefighters at Bangor International Airport is estimated to require a **one-time** funding request from the general fund of \$500k. We are asking for legislation to allow State employees who are Firefighters at Bangor International Airport to retire after 25 years of service without penalty. All expenses for salary, benefits and equipment are 100% Federally funded with zero expense to the State of Maine. To hire firefighters, we must have similar retirement plans with area Fire Departments. To continue to provide high-quality fire

protection to the Maine Air National Guard and the Bangor International Airport we ask that you support and prioritize us, the DVEM Firefighters at Bangor International Airport, by funding LD 1236 with the state's \$250 million surplus. Thank you.