

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs committee. Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury, members of the State and Local Government Committee. My name is Kris Segars. I am writing this testimony on my own personal time. I am testifying against LD2212, as it fails to restore much needed resources for the Executive Branch personal services budget. This proposed budget takes a step back away from closing the long standing state employee pay gap that must be closed to support the essential services the State of Maine workers provide to the public.

I have been working with the State for 7 years with the Bureau of Motor Vehicles. I also serve on the Board of Directors of my union, MSEA-SEIU Local 1989 which represents nearly 10,000 workers in the Executive Branch. In the 7 years I've been working for the State, we have never been fully staffed.

My worksite in Augusta is riddled with vacancies, and the turnover rate is astronomical. They're vacancies all over the building including the Municipal Coordinator Unit, the License and Information Unit, Medical Unit, Cash Office, as well as the branch offices, which deal directly with the public.

People are leaving because of low pay. Starting wages are super low at \$17.30/hr. Folks are coming for interviews, but after they learn about the pay, they decline the position. Others accept the position thinking they can make this work, and then realize they can't so they leave shortly after. Overtime is rarely if ever offered at BMV. We have a lot of single parents that come in, attracted to the benefits, but they quickly realize they can't afford it and leave.

People think they can work for about \$17 an hour, which is okay for some young folks still living at home, but when you are a parent, and trying to raise a family – this pay is not feasible. I pay \$218 per pay period to cover my son on my health insurance, which is a dramatic increase over the last year. These costs go up for families with more kids.

It all boils down to pay, the economy, and how people live. The days of buying a good home for \$50,000 are over. Working for the state is not appealing anymore. The vacancies across state government prove that.

At the BMV, vacancies equate to longer times to get documents processed. This impacts the public and the staff. Staff are getting worn out!! Plus we aren't getting people or quality employees to do the work. 5-6 years ago, BMV wouldn't hire a lot of these workers based on their qualifications, but we have to now because we have no other applicants to hire. On top of that, we keep losing people to better paying jobs. BMV has hired retired workers to keep the department afloat, but we can't keep doing that forever. We need to be proactive here.

In the Medical Department, if drivers' licenses are suspended, but the drivers are cleared by their doctor, the public is waiting longer to get the licenses and that interrupts their entire livelihood. From jobs to medical appointments, so and so forth.

People are happier at work when they are not living paycheck to paycheck, I understand most state workers are in that position. If we are working for the State of Maine, we should not have to get a second job to make ends meet.

No state worker should qualify for state assistance. The fact that the State of Maine has employees who do qualify for state assistance due to low wages - that is absolutely disgusting.

With this fixed, you will get better work. When workers are happy, they are going to deliver better work, and the public will benefit. When you pay the bare minimum, you get the bare minimum.

When we pay right, workers will want to stay. We need to develop the institutional knowledge. Institutional knowledge builds up quality and efficiency of work. This can be achieved by making sure the Executive Branch can afford to pay us fair, living wages.

I respectfully ask for you all to work to make this possible, and make significant progress to put this issue behind us.

Thank you for your time.

Kris Segars Oakland, Maine