

**LINDSAY
NOELLE
HARFORD**

4:00 PM, Tuesday, February
24, 2026 – Appropriations &
Financial Affairs Committee

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, Senator Baldacci,
Representative Salisbury, and Committee members.

My name is Lindsay Noelle Harford and I am here testifying on my personal time. I work just across the river from this building at the Department of Marine Resources, Licensing Division. I am also a member of the executive branch bargaining team. I have been aware for a long time of the fight Maine is making to avoid giving us the wage increases we deserve. I am here because the state employee pay-gap issue is deeply important, it's been too long ignored, and my voice cannot stay silent. Tonight, I would normally be spending time with my community, learning and sharing new skills, but I'm here because I am sick and tired of being undervalued as a state employee, and seeing my salary plan, and my retirement plan being underfunded year after year.

Why am I compelled to speak now after staying silent for years? This legislature diverted \$56 million away from the state employee salary plan in 2025, funds no longer available to use for essential salary increases. Enough is enough; this affects me and my fellow state employees. Which means, essentially, it affects *everyone* in this room and across the State of Maine.

Periodic increases in salary rates help Maine stay competitive and maintain its workforce. When you keep pace with inflation, you equip your state employees with the support they need to ensure that they can afford healthcare, are able to buy weekly groceries and keep a roof over their heads all without leaving them short of funds at the end of every month. If people's basic needs are met, they can set aside for emergencies, their future and for retirement. When you take away the very fund that fuels that security, you inject uncertainty, fear and upheaval.

To routinely scrape money out of OUR salary plan over the years, without putting any back, is a disservice to all the loyal Maine state government employees who ensure our government, *your government*, and services to the public, move as smoothly as possible. Without us, your government DOES NOT function. As a lifelong Mainer, I am sure I speak for many of my fellow employees, that we work with dedication and loyalty. We take pride of place, and we value our way of life. The Maine way of life.

If we keep going like this and being denied fair wage increases, the workforce will suffer more than it already does. I have friends who move away, leaving state jobs, because they can't make a living wage in Maine. My daughter, now a high school senior taking college classes, is planning to leave Maine for employment opportunities.

If you want the government to continue to work smoothly, you want happy and financially secure employees. We have gone far too long being underpaid and undervalued. Please restore the \$56 million in funds set aside for these essential salary increases to the Executive Branch salary plan. Consider the use of funds from the \$250 million surplus for this long unaddressed issue. Treat us fairly and give us financial stability. Pave the way for Maine to grow more and flourish. Send the message that Maine supports its workforce.

What you decide will speak volumes. Please speak loudly in support of giving us our money back to fund a fair contract, we are approaching 9 months with an expired contract. Invest in us, invest in Maine

Lindsay Noelle Harford
Department of Marine Resources, Licensing Division, Office Specialist