

Appropriations Committee Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine; Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts, Members of the Transportation Committee, I'm Brian Markey. I work for the MaineDOT currently as an Assistant Technician and prior to that I was a Transportation Worker III. I live in Kenduskeag and am writing on my own time asking the Legislature to make sure LD 2213 will fund a fair contract and help close the pay gap for state workers.

This April will be my 10th year with this Department and that doesn't include my time working at the Maine Emergency Readiness Management Center (Maine Military Authority). I would love to testify in person but I'm using my vacation time from the DOT to work a second job at the Bangor International Airport. Over the years State Employees have fallen farther behind our private sector colleagues that all too often occupy the same state offices we work at. Every year I watch consultants hired by DOT getting significant raises, while State Employees are stuck with low pay that fails to keep up with the cost-of-living. This is not a new problem. It's incredibly discouraging for all state employees to see budget surpluses year after year, yet the state employee pay gap remains unchanged. Currently, I'm working a second job to cover 'extra' expenses such as much needed home repairs, vehicle repairs and heating fuels. Some workers can't get a second job because they have to be on call.

You need to know that the pay at MaineDOT is not enough to even really survive on. This is why so many people leave or turn down job offers. I just barely pay the bills. And it's not just the low pay that's a problem. It's also the huge workloads caused by understaffing. There are so many vacant positions that we're all stretched way too thin. In my former job as a transportation worker, I once plowed continuously for 42-and-a-half hours straight, during the bomb cyclone of February 2017. You see double-vision, triple-vision, when you get that tired. This is all dangerous and hard work. It requires our full attention to keep everyone safe, not just the workers but the general public as well. My co-workers and I have pleaded with these committees for years, asking for your support to fix understaffing and low pay, yet in this last Highway Budget, you turned around and cut 60 vacant Transportation Worker jobs and took \$12.3 million away from our personal services budget that could go towards wage increases. You can fix this to help us support ourselves and our families.

You have the latest facts: As of 2024, State of Maine workers were being paid on average 14 percent less than what our counterparts make throughout New England, and that's even after accounting for regional differences. It's all spelled out in the 2024 State of Maine Market Study Report. And it's even worse for some positions. Maintenance Mechanics who work for the State of Maine are underpaid by 31 percent, according to the 2020 report. It should come as no surprise, then, that because MaineDOT competes with municipalities

and the private sector for workers, the pattern of MaineDOT training drivers who then leave state service for better pay in the private sectors and municipalities is continuing. The State Employee Pay Gap has worsened since that 2020 report came out in many areas, and we have made 1% progress on average since 2020. Simply put, State wages haven't kept up with the rising cost of living, so my coworkers and I have been falling further and further behind.

Every year, my state salary is whittled away by increased payroll deductions from our health insurance costs combined with outrageous childcare expenses. State Employees work tirelessly to serve the Citizens of Maine when Management chooses to pay Consultants 4 times what I get paid when we work side by side doing the same job and all the responsibility falls on the State Employee. The legislature has the money to fix this problem, and you have opportunities to raise more revenue to get the public sector workforce back on track, not to mention fix our pensions that were raided to give tax cuts to the rich in 2011. We need you to stop kicking this can down the road. Support us, and your constituents who rely on us at the DOT by using this surplus to undo the attrition rates, get us those 60 TW jobs back, and do what you need to do to fix our pension. We're sick and tired of not getting the respect and compensation we deserve.