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Testimony of Rep. Richard Evans Introducing LD 1311, “An Act Regarding the State Employee Health Commission”
April 22, 2021

Good morning Senator Sanborn, Representative Tepler and fellow members of the Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services Committee. I am Representative Richard Evans, and I represent seven communities in Piscataquis County. I am here today to introduce LD 1311, “An Act Regarding the State Employee Health Commission.”

The State Employee Health Commission has been a leader in innovation and trends in health and wellness not just for Maine, but for the country. This bill protects the most vital part of the Commission’s mission – to create a labor-management partnership via consensus building for any action to be taken. It is this consensus building and partnership that has allowed the Commission to be a leader in health and wellness innovation.

LD 1311 preserves and strengthens the value of that partnership by providing language that clarifies the role that the Commission currently has with the Department of Administrative and Financial Services (DAFS) which is in charge of administering the active and retired employee health insurance plans, the active dental plan, living resources program, and employee wellness programs for all those members who participate, including State of Maine and ancillary employees and their families.

The bill changes the language so that the Commission’s advisory role to the Office of Employee Health and Wellness and the Bureau of Human Resources of DAFS is strengthened to a role providing counsel, and changes the administration of the state employee health insurance program in statute by DAFS from being consistent with “rules adopted” by the Commission” to “actions taken and counsel provided” by the Commission. This language change would avoid any future ambiguity about whether an action taken or counsel given by the Commission is to be followed.

This bill would also put a voting procedure into statute where there currently is none, and would state that no action of the Commission could occur unless the vote was unanimous. The current practice of the Commission is to try to reach consensus and to ultimately reach a unanimous vote of labor and management, so this is just a clarification to formalize the current practice and avoid any future ambiguity.

District 120: Atkinson, Brownville, Dover-Foxcroft, Medford, Milo, the Plantation of Lake View and the unorganized territory of Orneville Township

Finally, the bill updates the titles of positions and programs associated with the State Employee Health Commission and state employee health insurance program to their current designations.

Thank you very much for your consideration.