

## Testimony in Support of LD 240

Good morning, Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of LD 240, *An Act to Create Consistency in Retirement Service Benefits Deferral Under the Maine Public Employees Retirement System*.

Unfortunately, I am unable to testify in person today, as I must be in court in South Paris related to a criminal investigation.

My name is Edward Hastings, and I am a resident of the Town of Chesterville and work as a Senior Fire Investigator for the Office of State Fire Marshal. I am testifying as an individual not representing my employer.

I am writing in support of this bill, because I am impacted by the outcome, and had no idea until it was recently brought to my attention.

I started my fulltime law enforcement career in 2004 as a Police Officer for the Town of Farmington. I served in this position until 2008 at which time I was hired as a Fire Investigator for the Office of State Fire Marshal and served until 2012. That year, I returned to the Town of Farmington to fulfill the role of Patrol Sergeant where I served until 2021. In 2021, I returned to the State Fire Marshal's Office and became one of the Senior Fire Investigators. The Town of Farmington has a 20-year no-age retirement plan of which I have completed just over 13 years of the 20 years required. The Fire Marshal's Office has a 20-year no-age retirement plan, which I have completed 7 years of the required 20 years. These two retirement plans don't communicate; therefore, I am required to work an additional 13 years.

My preferred legislation would be to allow these retirement plans to communicate, though I am not prepared to explain what the financial implications of this change would look like.

Recently I have learned there are rules under the current retirement system, which require me to begin collecting all state retirement benefits as soon as I become eligible for retirement from state service. Because I did not complete the full 20-year plan while employed by the Town of Farmington, my service there defaults to the standard state retirement plan, which includes an age requirement of 60.

I will be eligible to retire from state service at age 54. However, because I have not yet reached the age of 60, my Farmington retirement benefit will be penalized at a rate of 6% per year for the six years between my retirement eligibility and age 60. This results in a 36% reduction in my retirement benefit earned from my time with the Town of Farmington. I now face a financial penalty. This bill will allow me to leave my earned benefits from Farmington until I reach my normal retirement age and collect it at that time without penalty. There are no costs to the retirement system for this change and spares me the 36% penalty in earned benefits for transitioning to State service.

I urge you to support and pass this bill, which will allow me to defer my Farmington retirement benefit until I reach the appropriate age, ensuring that I receive the full benefit I have rightfully earned.

I want to extend my gratitude to Senator Hickman for sponsoring this important legislation and to the committee for considering it.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Edward Hastings