

## Testimony in support of LD137

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder and the distinguished members of the Maine State Labor Committee, my name is Violet Hyatt, and I am submitting this letter in support of LD137 "An Act to Expand the 1998 Special Retirement Plan to Include Employees Who Work for the Office of Chief Medical Examiner".

I am the spouse of Erik Hyatt, who works for the OCME. I am also a registered nurse with over 29 years' experience. As a nurse I have worked with those who are experiencing illness, dealing with trauma and providing end-of-life care. I have good days in my work, positive aspects of the job like sending someone home, successfully administering life saving measures, or holding a patient's hand, knowing that you are bringing them comfort. I treasure these days. Sadly, my husband doesn't get "good days" on the job. All the cases involve tragedy.

This office sees the absolute worst that humanity can do to each other. Every questionable death in the State of Maine is investigated by their office. Put yourself in their place and imagine handling the deaths in Lewiston. Being onsite, helping to gather evidence and staying onsite until all the victims were brought to their office in Augusta. Then imagine working WELL beyond your normal day, and both days on the weekend so that the family members could get their closure as quickly as possible.

Imagine being the person who had to autopsy a child, to discover that they suffered years of abuse and died at the hands of those abusers. Then you'd have to take pictures of and record every injury. EVERY injury. One child they autopsied had 40 and 50 "distinct blunt-force injuries" per the court testimony quoted in the newspaper.


My husband had been part of these and many other cases like this, and I say with all honesty, he was NOT "okay" after. He tries to leave the work in the office, but it's not possible. He had one case involving our neighbor's nephew, a young man we had met.

Yet he still does his best for the people of Maine every day, as does everyone he works with. However, as a father, a grandfather- he comes home devastated. He wakes up from nightmares, seeing certain cases over and over again, like the 10 year old that died who looked so much like our daughter at that age.

I'm not privy to all the workings of their office but I have interacted with all the employees at outside events. I have extensive mental health experience, and while diagnosing is outside my scope of practice, I can clearly see the signs and symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Reactive Attachment Disorder, and Adjustment Disorder. I've seen them try to not react when curious citizens ask them about their job with questions like "What's the weirdest death you've ever had". Worse is when asked "Did you have to do the autopsy on so-and-so? That was so sad wasn't it".

Death is a topic most people aren't comfortable thinking about. They are caring, conscientious people who do a job that most people couldn't. In closing, please support LD137. And thank you for your support of these diligent workers for the citizens of the State of Maine.

Sincerely,

 Violet W. Hyatt, RN, BSN, CPHQ