



Troy D. Jackson
President of the Senate

THE MAINE SENATE
130th Legislature

3 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

Testimony in Support of LD 1041
An Act To Include Certain Mental Health Workers Under the 1998 Special Plan for Retirement

Presented to the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing
Monday, March 29, 2021

Senator Hickman, Representative Sylvester, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing,

My name is Troy Jackson and I have the honor of serving as the President of the Maine Senate and representing northern Aroostook County. I am here today to lend my support to LD 1041 "An Act To Include Certain Mental Health Workers Under the 1998 Special Plan for Retirement."

This bill adds mental health workers employed on October 1, 2021, and hired thereafter who provide direct care to persons in need of mental health services from the Department of Health and Human Services to the 1998 Special Plan of the Maine Public Employees Retirement System. These workers are committed individuals who are willing to care for clients who can be unpredictable and are sometimes violent.

The dire situation is well acknowledged. Last week the Health and Human Services Committee heard LD 629, a Resolve to establish a task force to study ways to improve safety and protect health care workers from violence in mental health hospitals. Information was supplied on behalf of the staff of Dorothea Dix Psychiatric Center and Riverview Psychiatric Center. Within the testimony, the Superintendent and Clinical Director of Dorothea Dix stated the following: "The Hospitals may be court-ordered to admit patients who cannot be safely managed in an inpatient setting. The Hospitals specialize in treatment of those patients who are committed to treatment because of dangerous behaviors, either to their self or others and the treatment of that dangerous behavior may have some association with misdirected aggressive or impulsive acts. The treatment brings mental health care workers, as part of their assigned duties, in direct contact with patients who may exhibit this degree of violent behavior."¹ Finally, the

¹ <http://legislature.maine.gov/bills/getTestimonyDoc.asp?id=147308>

testimony indicates that within this challenging environment, the staff has experienced injurious assaults in the workplace.² If this task force is funded, it may suggest ways to create a safer environment in the future, but the stress and injuries that these dedicated workers have been in and will be subjected to cannot be alleviated.

Obviously, the 1998 Special Plan is complicated, yet adding these deserving employees to the Plan is one way we can recognize the difficulties faced by them each and every day they step through the doors of their workplace. I believe you will hear from some of these very employees today.

Thank you for your attention and I will try my best to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Troy Jackson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "T".

President of the Maine Senate
Senate District 1

² <http://legislature.maine.gov/bills/getTestimonyDoc.asp?id=147308>