



April 09, 2021

*TESTIMONY BEFORE THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND HOUSING  
RE: LD 1103  
AN ACT TO ALLOW A 5-YEAR ENROLLMENT IN THE PARTICIPATING LOCAL DISTRICT  
RETIREMENT PROGRAM FOR CERTAIN LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS, FIREFIGHTERS, AND  
OTHER MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES*

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Good Morning Senator Chair Hickman and Representative Chair Sylvester, and Members of the Joint Committee on Labor and Housing.

My name is Leonard Blanchette, I am a resident of Winthrop, Maine, and the General Manager for the Brunswick Sewer District, Brunswick, Maine. I offer this testimony in support of LD 1103.

As the general manager I have met with our new employees and advocated for them to join the MEPSERS retirement program. In fact, I have advocated to MEPSERS to make enrollment mandatory, but was told that cannot be. I had pushed mandatory enrollment because my employees have only one shot at joining. If they declined, then they can never join while still an employee at the District. I did not then, and continue to do so now, consider a one-time option to be fair to our employees.

New employees, in particular the younger ones with families, are hesitant to give up 8% of their pay in contributions to the PLD retirement program. We have a good starting wage, but not all municipal employers can afford a high starting wage. It is only after some time with several wage increases are the employees comfortable contributing 8% to the program. Giving the new employee a five-year window is fair. Especially when you consider that the vast majority of municipal employees become long-term with the same employer. I am 34 years with my employer. Imagine if I only had that one opportunity 34 years ago to enroll in MEPSERS PLD program. I am a member, but I would not have been under the current requirement. I was several years into my current employment when I enrolled. I wonder how many members MEPSERS has lost because of



their one-time only option to join.

Thank you for the provision in this bill that also provides a one-time opportunity for enrollment for those who have gone past their five-year work anniversary. And I believe this bill also allows those employees both within and beyond the five-year timeframe to be able to buy-back those non-member years under 3. Creditable service granted, section 18358.

In conclusion, I urge the committee to vote an Ought to Pass for LD 1103. Thank you for your time and attention.