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**Testimony of Senator Harold “Trey” Stewart  
Presenting L.D. 341, An Act to Address the Windfall Elimination Provision  
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing  
May 5, 2021**

Senator Hickman, Representative Sylvester and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing: I am Senator Trey Stewart and I have the honor of representing 51 communities in Aroostook and Penobscot Counties. I am before you today to present testimony on L.D. 341, An Act to Address the Windfall Elimination Provision.

The windfall elimination impacts teachers, police officers, and other state employees that pay into Maine’s Public Employee Retirement System. I am sure many of you have heard about this elimination as legislation and joint resolutions have been submitted in the past to eliminate this provision, which penalizes state employees for their public service work. No doubt, we have all had constituents contact us about this issue, not realizing that at its heart, it is one that can only be addressed in DC. If you’re anything like me, you get frustrated when we have to regrettably explain that there isn’t anything we, as state lawmakers, can do to remedy this painful situation. And, if you’re like me, you want to get creative in finding other possible solutions other than passing the buck on to Congress. LD 341 is that possible solution.

While the federal government’s involvement is critical, I am proposing that the committee adopt the proposed amendment which is a Resolve, To Establish the Committee to Study the Government Pension Offset and Windfall Elimination Provision. The bi-partisan committee would be comprised of 11 members, would examine the impact that Mainers subject to the Government Pension Offset and Windfall Elimination currently face. I believe the first step in addressing this problem is understanding how detrimental it really is to our constituents and Maine people. The other goal of this amendment is to create an inter-state compact with the other 13 or so states that are impacted by this problem to convene and petition the federal government to correct this issue that impacts employees in numerous other states. I believe having that information will be beneficial and will help give a clearer picture for our Congressional delegations on the need to fix this problem.

With the change of administration in Washington, there is more hope now than ever that we may have a shot at solving a problem that has existed for longer than I have been alive. As a new generation shoulders the burden of the WEP in Maine and several other states, it’s time that we

take a different approach in how we work to resolve the issue and get creative in re-doubling our efforts to send a clear message to DC. That message is simple- Maine's next generation of retirees shouldn't be penalized for a poor choice made over 30 years ago without any option for recourse. Please join me in supporting this effort so that we can demonstrate to our constituents that we aren't the broken system that DC has demonstrated itself as- we are Maine, we are different, and we can find a way.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important legislation. I look forward to answering any questions the committee may have at this time.