

May 12, 2023

Dear Maine Legislators,

I am writing this on my own time to inform you of the urgent need to support LD 1854 and to increase funding to the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife.

In the last 3 years at the Dry Mills State Fish Hatchery in Gray, Maine, we have had significant turnover and were short-handed for an extended period of time.

The most difficult aspect of this is training employees just to have them leave for better pay elsewhere! Retention is at an all-time low and recruitment is very difficult at this time. I realize this is an issue all across Maine, both private and public; however, it is especially difficult when you are dealing with raising and stocking live fish for the public.

Prime examples of us losing good people are Jamie Brey and Greg Bell -- two supervisors. Jamie left to work for DOT and Greg is just leaving because he is tired of fighting with the state for more pay for him and his employees. I personally would leave also; however, I am only two and a half years away from retirement after having worked for Inland Fisheries and Wildlife for almost 35 years now.

During the pandemic, a couple years ago out of four employees here at the Dry Mills Hatchery only 2 remained for almost two months -- myself and my supervisor Greg Bell. That's just too hard on workers over 50 years old.

I feel the only way to retain our workforce is to close the pay gap between state employees and what other states pay along with the private sector. Thank you to all legislators for listening to my testimony.

Sincerely yours,

Mike Andrews