

My name is Lasca Black, I live in Augusta and I work at Riverview Psychiatric as an RN. I am writing on my own time in support of LD 1854, An Act to Complete and Implement the Comprehensive Review of the Classification and Compensation System for Executive Branch Employees.

I have been here ten years and frequently want to leave because this is a VERY dangerous place to work as you can imagine. The big problem is that we cannot keep our nurses, so we end up chronically understaffed or using expensive travel nurses who can only do half of what we do. They get paid A LOT more and we work harder because we have to pick up all their slack. That makes no sense. Additionally, most of us do not want to work so many hours. We can go to Maine General and make the same base pay and get paid for 40 hours for a 36 hour week. Here we work 36 hours one week and 43.25 the next... plus mandates and overtime that we pick up because we are short so often. We wouldn't get so burned out if we had an option of working 36 hours and we might get more staff if there were an option of part time work of some sort. Due to position numbers being low for full time staff, they don't let us veer from full time... some just don't want full time or cannot do it, so we lose opportunities for staff due to this issue.

As far as pay goes. Too much of our pay is put into stipends, even when the legislature proposes it be base pay, we end up with a stipend. Every time I get a raise, I get a raise on my base pay, but stipends are a third of my pay. Why work in a dangerous, understaffed place where you feel underappreciated and underpaid? The current culture in America is to live harder, not work harder... I think you all know that. At RPC we simply work harder with no other options and not enough pay to make it worth our while knowing we can be put out of work at any moment due to severe injuries and PTSD from their occurrence. Unless you work here and do what we do, it is hard to imagine what we go through.

I implore you to pay us with BASE pay that at the very least makes it hard for us to leave and attracts people to come here. Honestly, money is where it's at in a place like this, because it is often an ungrateful job. Closing the pay gap between RPC nurses and nurses working in other private & public sector jobs would go a long way toward recruiting and retaining staff. I also ask that someone consider sponsoring a 36 hour work week for 40 hours of pay for those nurses that want to take advantage of it. I see that as a great benefit. Thank you for your time.