Committee on State and Local Government
℅ Legislative Information Office
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

May 12, 2023

RE: LD 1854, *An Act to Complete and Implement the Comprehensive Review of the Classification and Compensation System for Executive Branch Employees*

Dear Senator Nangle, Representative Stover, and Members of the State and Local Government Committee:

My name is Francesca Gundrum and I am Maine Audubon's Policy Advocate. Maine Audubon is a wildlife conservation non-profit – we fulfill our mission to "conserve Maine's wildlife and wildlife habitat" by engaging people of all ages in nature through a science-based approach to education, conservation, and advocacy. On behalf of Maine Audubon and our 30,000 members, supporters, and volunteers, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in favor of LD 1854, *An Act to Complete and Implement the Comprehensive Review of the Classification and Compensation System for Executive Branch Employees.*

Maine Audubon works closely with our state's natural resource agencies to protect our state's fish and wildlife, implement thoughtful climate and clean energy policies, restore and enhance the quality of our environment, and much more. These initiatives help define our state's character, bolster our economy, and encourage resilience amongst our communities – wildlife and human alike. It is our understanding that nearly all of the agencies tasked with carrying out this important work are understaffed and underpaid. It is imperative that we compensate current employees fairly *and* work to retain those employees. Additionally, our state agencies are unable to fill key positions due to non-competitive salary levels. Position vacancies are hindering our natural resource agencies' ability to do their best work protecting and restoring Maine's natural resources.

Maine Audubon supports LD 1854 because it addresses the root causes of Maine's staffing issues and offers a common-sense and necessary approach to evaluating where we are at and planning for where we must go next. The bill would require the state to perform a compensation study every two years; conduct a comprehensive classification review every 10 years; complete and implement the

results of those studies by July 1, 2024; and establish a State Employee Compensation Stabilization Fund to help close the state employee pay gap.

The urgency of acting on both the climate crisis and the biodiversity crisis demands a lot from our natural resources agencies. We cannot expect them to complete this essential work without adequate support. Closing pay gaps and updating our broken classification system is a step in the right direction for our state. We urge the Committee to support this bill. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Francesca "Ches" Gundrum
Policy Advocate