

Robert Leighton
Portland
LD 1854

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to you in strong support of LD 1854. As a 7 year state employee working for the Department of Environmental Protection, I've seen many folks come and go, including within my own work unit. We recently lost a valuable Planning and Research Assistant, who was working at around \$18 per hour. To put this in perspective, this person is a recent graduate who was a dual major in two STEM subjects. Meanwhile, in Portland ME we have McDonald's workers that are starting at around \$16 per hour. Even when comparing apples to apples, the average pay gap between state workers and their private sector counterparts is 15%! For some, that 15% is the difference between having to decide between paying off student loans, their credit card debt, or paying for the groceries. While working for state government gives many of us a sense of purpose and fulfillment, working on behalf of the people of Maine shouldn't come with a deep financial cost. As someone with a background in Economics, if you don't provide a wage commensurate with talent and experience, then talent will continue to leave state government for the private sector, including in other states. Think of closing the wage gap as an investment in ALL Maine workers, and remind us that hard work and talent should be rewarded. Invest in the future of all Mainers!

Sincerely,
Robert Leighton