

Good morning Senator Nangle, Representative Stover and members of the Committee on State and Local Government. My name is Dawn West and I am here on my own time and volition to speak in support of LD1854.

I would like to encourage you to support LD1854 and to help close the pay gap. Closing the pay gap would not only benefit the morale of employees across the state, but would aid in retention and recruitment. I had heard prior to coming to work for the state, the state did not pay well. You know what? They were right. I am fairly new to working for the state, only having come on board December of last year. I took a pay cut to come here. Think about that a pay cut. I had reasons for taking the decrease in pay to have a better home /work balance. This is important as we all know to distress and unwind. Having worked the last 6 years in long term care home/work balance was a very difficult thing to find.

As a result of taking the pay cut to come here I have had to take on a part time job to make up the difference in pay. I am lucky as I do not have children and can do so. There are many families who work for the state who do not have that option. I know an increase in pay would ease the burdens of many and allow me to have true home/life balance. I can only say that if it is beneficial for one would it not for all? Think of the moms who could stay home at night with their children, or take them to school in the morning instead of rushing out the door to take advantage of the little overtime that is available to get an extra boost in their paycheck.

Now let us consider the boost in morale. I know in my short term in the office I have heard many people say "We do not get paid enough." Giving the staff an increase to make them even with their co-workers across the country would make the employees feel appreciated instead of overworked and underpaid. To put the importance of closing the pay gap into perspective, we have a lady who works in our office who did the exact same job as she does now in a different state. This other state was paying her almost 10 dollars more an hour when she left to move to Maine. She has been employed I think around 5 years now. This is why the comprehensive pay studies are so important. We are not asking for the world just to catch up to the rest of the country. Pay gaps are being address across all types of work environments and it is time Maine did the same. It only seems fitting with the state of the economy and the ability of others to close their pay gaps that ours should be addressed as well.

I am asking you to please consider supporting LD 1854 to make Maine better and let us live by Maine the way life should be. Thank you for your time.