

February 7th, 2024

Senator Nangle, Representative Stover, members of the Committee on State and Local Government, my name is Jeffrey Doyon. I'm a resident of Winslow, Maine. I'm writing on my own time in support of LD 2121, An Act to Address Chronic Understaffing of State Government Positions.

I have worked for the State of Maine for 30 years. Over the years the State has gone through some budgetary issues where there was no room to negotiate for any type of cost-of-living increase, even though, like the State, my expenses have continued to increase due to the economy. But when the economy got better, our wages weren't looked at or adequately addressed. They are only looked at when the contracts are up - and when contracts expire and are up for negotiations, the past has not been addressed, we are still falling behind. This is not due to lack of effort on our part, we have tried to see this get fixed. There have been pay studies done because of these staffing shortages, but the studies have not been properly acted upon. Maine has kept state wages behind the private sector and behind the other states in the New England, there's no good reason for it. We are having major recruitment and retention issues due to the pay that is being offered. The work needs to be done, vacancies or not. The lack of staffing also causes delays in service and increases workers stress due to falling behind. LD2121 will greatly help fix this root issue with State government functionality.

LD 2121 would provide \$165 million in funding for a new compensation and classification system for State of Maine Executive Branch workers and close the state employee pay gap. The new compensation and classification system would address the fact that two studies, one in 2020 and the other in 2009, show that state workers are underpaid by 15%, on average, compared to their public and private sector counterparts in Maine and New England, and that it's even worse for classifications such as civil engineers, accountants, chemists, mechanics and correctional workers. This issue drives our staffing problems which get in the way of state agencies doing the best job we can to serve the people of Maine.

Please support LD 2121. We need better wages to keep staff and to be able to recruit well qualified people. Help us attract workers into working for the Department again so the vacancies can be filled and be staffed for the work that we need to do to. Help us help those who go to the State for help.

Jeffrey Doyon