

Good day, Chair Baldacci, Chair Salisbury, and members of the Committee On State and Local Government. I am James Bailey, a licensed social worker employed at Dorothea Dix Psychiatric Center and hospital chapter president of the Maine Service Employee Association, Local 1989. I am submitting this testimony on my own time in support of LD1265, LD 1539, and LD 1744.

LD 1265 - An Act to Amend the Laws Governing Public Employee Market Pay Studies and Comprehensive Reviews of the Classification Plan for State Service Positions.

Human Resources is stretched in their staffing and capacity of their current duties, like many departments and agencies in Maine state government. The Market Pay studies and Classifications Plan reviews are two items that require significant resources but happen seldomly: three to four each decade. It makes perfect sense for these tasks to be contracted to firms that routinely do these types of studies. MSEA routinely advocates for Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) to be included in the review and development of various functions of state government and a high-effort & rare-occurrence function is the ideal circumstance to utilize contracted services. Furthermore, allowing a neutral third party to complete a study is essential for fair deployment. The most recent pay study was conducted by HR and was only a ~20% sampling of current classifications, so 4-out-of-5 state employees will have to wait another four years to have a chance at a study looking at their pay. Also, I don't think that the State would accept a pay study that was completed by MSEA, so then, it is reasonable for both parties to agree to a third-party vendor.

LD 1539 - An Act to Create a State Employee Compensation Stabilization Fund. When the economy is doing poorly, the thousands of State of Maine employees are often some of the first to shoulder the burden through hiring freezes, pay freezes, furloughs, and layoffs. This is evident from the 2020 Market Pay Report that found that, on average, state employees make 15% less than their regional counterparts. But when the economy is doing well and there is opportunity for state employees to catch up, other projects are prioritized. Despite several percentage pay increases between the contracts for 2019, 2021, and 2023, a 2024 Market Pay Report found that, on average, state employees were making 14% less than their regional counterparts. We are often negotiating to catch up to where the rest of the workforce is; for example, a Hospital Custodial Worker I on step 6 (out of 9), makes \$0.12/hr less than a new hire at a fast food restaurant down the street from the hospital. Any act that dedicates some revenues to lifting state workers up is worth the cost. You get the state government that you pay for.

LD 1744 - An Act to Modify Provisions of the State Civil Service System Governing Employee Recruitment and Retention. Is the State's goal to provide effective, efficient

governance? Or is it to provide “adequate” governance, take the monetary savings of the difference, and fund other projects? There is an about 1-in-7 job vacancy in Maine; and those 6-in-7 employees are paid at 86% of regional counterparts. Some may see this as evidence that the state could operate with about 15% less of a payroll budget, but for what product? A 2024 Colby College (Strengthening Maine’s Civic Life) survey found that about 1-in-4 residents never trust state government and only about 1-in-3 mostly or always trust state government. Taxes are levied to fund a product, but the state is only delivering on about 85% (6-in-7) of what’s promised. “Adequate”. The State should take action on recruiting and retaining qualified employees to produce a great product for the residents of Maine and should be doing so in cooperation with the union, not working against it. As it stands, the criteria to even consider a recruitment and retention stipend is a high bar, and then of the three-person committee to decide, two represent “Management” and only one represents “Labor.” The state workers, the union, want to provide a great product to the citizens of Maine but need the resources to do so, not to be hamstrung by the Administration.

For those that ask, “Isn’t this subject to bargaining?” on these or other bills: the Legislature found it appropriate to make illegal one of a Union’s greatest tools but did not reciprocate similarly with management. Please understand that advocacy through the Legislature is necessary under these circumstances.

Thank you,

James Bailey