

The Maine Heritage Policy Center Testimony to Oppose LD 1538

"An Act Regarding Compensation Equity for Positions in the Maine Community College System"

Senator Millett, Representative Kornfield, and distinguished members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Adam Crepeau and I serve as a policy analyst at The Maine Heritage Policy Center. Thank you for the opportunity to speak in opposition to LD 1538.

The Maine Heritage Policy Center is opposed to LD 1538 because it would mandate that all employees in “comparable positions” at the Maine Community College System are paid the same salary. While this sounds reasonable on paper, it is not practical. Some employees may exert more effort or are more effective in their roles than others, making them more valuable to the Maine Community College System. Giving all employees the same salary regardless of their merits would likely reduce productivity. In addition, the cost of living varies in Maine - it is much less expensive to live in Aroostook County than it is to reside in Cumberland County. While the intent of this bill is likely well-intentioned, it would only achieve continuity, not “equity.”

Organized labor can already negotiate the salaries of employees at the Maine Community College System. Currently, the contract between the Maine Community College System and the Maine State Employees’ Association outlines that “employees shall progress from step to step in salary grade on the basis of satisfactory job performance based upon established standards of performance.”¹ This bill would award low achievers by giving them the same salary as individuals that are more effective in their roles, thereby lowering incentive to perform well overall. The Maine Heritage Policy Center is in favor of merit increases, which are awarded based on the performance of individuals, not handed out for simply showing up to work.

Further, this bill would only create continuity, not equity, in the Maine Community College System. According to the US Census Bureau, the median household income in Cumberland County was nearly \$66,000 in 2017.² In contrast, the median household income in Aroostook County was under \$40,000 that same year.³ It would not be “equitable” to give employees at Northern Maine Community College the same rate of compensation that employees at Southern Maine Community College receive because the cost of living is not the same.

¹ <http://www.mseaseiu.org/wordpress/contracts/Community%20College/MCCSSupportCBA.pdf>

² <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=CF>

³ Ibid.

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Because labor unions have the ability to negotiate “pay equity” into collective bargaining contracts, this legislation is unnecessary and would only serve to grow costs within the system without providing tangible benefits to students. For those reasons, The Maine Heritage Policy Center urges the committee to vote, “Ought Not to Pass” on LD 1538. Thank you.