# Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 10, 2023

Kiran Ahuja
Director
U.S. Office of Personnel Management
1900 E Street, NW
Washington, DC 20415-1000

Dear Director Ahuja,

We write today to strongly urge the Office of Personnel Management's Federal Salary Council to consider changing the locality pay for Kennebec and Penobscot Counties in Maine.

Kennebec County is the duty station to more than 1,300 GS employees and includes the Togus Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Center, the only Veterans Health Administration Medical Center servicing the state of Maine. In addition to primary care, Togus VA Medical Center is the only facility in the state providing geriatric care, homeless veteran care, caregiver support, spinal cord injuries and disorders care, and pain management services.

Penobscot County is home to the Bangor VA Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) and Bangor Vet Center, with over 100 GS employees uniquely serving the needs of their community. The Bangor CBOC is the only clinic outside of Portland, ME, to offer audiology, cardiology, and dental services. The Bangor Vet Center supplements, and is separate from, the mental health counseling services provided through traditional VA medical centers, helping address already existing challenges in a veteran's ability to access timely mental health services.

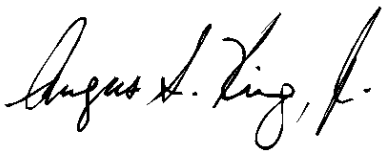
As the oldest state in the nation, with the fifth highest veteran population, Mainers rely heavily on the services offered at VA facilities. Workforce retention continues to be of utmost importance. The VA's ability to provide our veterans the level of care they deserve is impacted by job vacancies and a high rate of turnover among its health care workforce, most often the result of pay and compensation issues, exacerbated by the increased cost of living. An increased locality pay rate for Kennebec and Penobscot Counties is critical for ensuring the recruitment and retention of the federal workforce in these areas, offering salaries commensurate to their private sector counterparts, allowing them to continue to carry out their agencies' missions effectively.

We urge the Federal Salary Council to include Kennebec and Penobscot Counties as areas of application to the Boston locality pay area. The "Rest of United States" designation does not promote equitable access to care for our Maine veterans and pay for our healthcare providers as the cost of living is similar to surrounding counties that are included in the Boston locality.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Jared F. Golden
Member of Congress



Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator

Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress

Susan M. Collins
United States Senator