

Maya Faulstich  
Yarmouth, ME  
LD 1170

April 10, 2023

To: Senator Chipman, Representative Williams, and Honorable members of the committee

From: Maya Faulstich

Re: Testimony in Support of Resolve, to Promote Passenger Rail for Commuters, LD 1170

My name is Maya Faulstich and I live in Yarmouth Maine. I am writing as a student and activist with Maine Youth Action, to urge you to vote “ought to pass” on LD 1170. This bill would direct the Department of Transportation to study what improvements could be made to the Amtrak Downeaster to better serve commuters and reduce emissions. As a high schooler, I don’t have my driver’s license yet, and would greatly appreciate a way to get around without forcing my parents to drive me places. With public transit, the youth can start to be independent without having to own a vehicle. Many students cannot afford a car, even if they are old enough to drive. In 2022, the average monthly cost of car ownership was \$894! Mainers with lower or fixed incomes tend to pay a higher share for transportation, typically 25-38% of their total income. High transportation costs burden low-income households, and they are often left without money for food, housing, utilities, energy, and other necessities. Public transit systems, including passenger rail, also increase accessibility for older Mainers and Mainers with disabilities who may be unable or unsafe to drive. Public transportation would allow many people, regardless of economic status, to get to places they need to be. Additionally, transportation accounts for 54% of our emissions and is the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in our state! By creating a roadmap for passenger rail transportation with this bill, we could reduce carbon emissions from personal cars traveling to and from Brunswick, Freeport, Portland, Saco-Biddeford, Wells-Sanford, and other places.

The Amtrak Downeaster runs through my town, so I am very excited about how this bill could present more accessible opportunities for me to get to other towns and cities since I don’t have a driver's license, and can’t afford my own car. With LD 1170, we now have an amazing opportunity to significantly cut our carbon emissions, meet the needs of a broader and more diverse population of travelers and commuters, and reduce the financial strain on people all around Maine! With this study, we would be able to understand how we can make passenger rail more accessible and attractive, which is desperately needed if we want to mitigate climate change. Climate change isn’t going away anytime soon, so if legislators don’t act now, the costs and damages will be much higher in the future. Please ensure that everyone I know can have access to transportation, regardless of age, and financial or physical abilities. Help increase the quality of life for people all across Maine today, by passing LD 1170.

Respectfully submitted,  
Maya Faulstich