



To: Committee on Transportation

From: Ezra Sassaman, Maine Youth for Climate Justice

Date: April 25, 2023

Re: Testimony in favor of LD 1559: An Act to Advance the State's Public Transit Systems by Reinvigorating the Public Transit Advisory Council and Increasing Funding

Senator Chipman, Representative Williams, and the members of the Committee on Transportation, my name is Ezra Sassaman. I am writing as a representative for Maine Youth for Climate Justice (MYCJ), a coalition of over 460 youth from across the state who are fighting for bold climate action and a just transition to a livable future in Maine. I am writing in favor of LD 1559.

Taking public transportation seriously is an important aspect of climate justice. Roughly 76% of Mainers use a single occupancy vehicle as their primary mode of transportation, while only 0.4% of Mainers use public transit. As it currently stands, 54% of Maine's carbon emissions stem from the transportation sector.¹ To reach our climate action goals as a state, we must promote and adequately fund low-carbon public transportation solutions.

In addition to the benefits to the climate, public transportation represents an affordable option for low-income Mainers. The monthly costs of a personal vehicle, essentially the default for Maine transportation, averages to \$894 for a new vehicle or \$515 for a used car driven 15,000 miles annually.²

¹ Dr. Geoff Morrison et al., "[Executive Summary: Maine Clean Transportation Roadmap](#)", *GEO/GOPIF*, December 2021.

² Whitney Vandiver and Shannon Bradley, "[What is the Total Cost of Owning a Car](#)", *Nerdwallet*, March 2023.

We believe passing LD 1559 is an important first step towards meeting the needs of a broader and more diverse population of travelers and commuters.

Youth in Maine and around the world will bear the costs of legislative inaction on the climate crisis and transportation access inequity. If decision-makers continue to ignore these crises, these interconnected problems will persist and mutually worsen each other for us and future generations. That is why we support this bill increasing Public Transit Advisory Council representation by giving youth climate activist a seat at the table alongside labor interests and immigrant communities.

For the above reasons, our coalition, Maine Youth for Climate Justice, urges you to vote ought-to-pass on LD 1559. Thank you.