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Testimony Before the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation  
In Support of Enhanced School Bus Safety and Driver Accountability  
January 29, 2026

Senator Chipman, Representative Williams, and distinguished members of the Transportation Committee:

I am a resident of Midcoast Maine, appearing today to urge this committee to take decisive action on school bus safety.

My family has a personal connection to the 12-year-old boy who was killed in Rockland this past November. My wife was involved in his upbringing, and while I was a family friend, I remember him vividly as a bright, kind, and energetic child—a "beast" at video games who had a future that was stolen by a series of preventable failures.

I am not here today solely out of grief, but because of a deep sense of injustice regarding the negligence that led to this tragedy.

The investigation into this incident has highlighted two critical areas where our state is failing its students:

- The "Grandfather" Loophole: It is unacceptable that modern safety mechanisms—such as interlocking braking systems that prevent a bus from moving while doors are open—are not mandatory for every bus on the road. We currently have a system where a child's safety depends on the age of the bus assigned to their route. A safety feature that is deemed "essential" for a 2024 model should be considered mandatory for any vehicle entrusted with transporting children, regardless of its manufacture date.
- Driver Accountability and Screening: Technology only works if the operator follows protocol. We have seen instances where crossing arms were not deployed and safety measures were treated as optional. Furthermore, we must address the standards of those we hire. There is a clear need for harsher, more comprehensive screening processes for drivers to ensure that the individuals behind the wheel possess both the professional record and the personal diligence required for this high-stakes responsibility.

Negligence should never be a factor in a child's commute to school. I urge this committee to eliminate the grandfathering of outdated equipment, mandate the use of control arms, and raise the bar for driver oversight across the State of Maine.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to ensuring that no other family has to suffer a loss like this.