



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Testimony of Rep. Cheryl Golek introducing LD 62, An Act to Require Antipinch Sensors on School Bus Doors Before the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation

Senator Chipman, Representative Williams, and distinguished members of the Transportation Committee, my name is Cheryl Golek, and I represent House District 99, which consists of the Town of Harpswell and part of Brunswick. I come before you today to ask for your support of **LD 62, An Act to Require Antipinch Sensors on School Bus Doors**.

LD 62 would require school buses to be equipped with certain technology to prevent a school bus door from closing on a person's limb or another body part.

Maine recently had two school bus dragging incidents in 2022, one in Buxton where a 6-year-old boy's backpack was caught in the bus door as he exited and was dragged nearly 700 feet down a road before the bus stopped again.¹ Then again, that same year in Auburn, a ten-year-old boy's arm was caught in the door of his school bus as he attempted to exit, and he was dragged between 50 to 60 feet. before the bus finally came to a stop at a stop sign and he was released.²

As a mother, I understand the fear felt by a parent that witnesses their child in an accident. Years ago, my son was caught on the front bumper of his school bus, which led him to be dragged down a road and run over by his school bus. I am fortunate he is still alive today after this near-tragic incident. I am sharing this small snapshot of a personal story with you today to show that good can be created out of a tragedy, and lives can be saved. Years after my son's accident in 2019, LD 19 was introduced in the 129th Legislature by the Honorable Jay McCreight and was signed into law by Governor Mills. Now, all Maine school buses are required to have crossing arms on them.

¹ WMTW. (May 13, 2022) *Maine Kindergartener Dragged by School Bus*. Retrieved from <https://www.wmtw.com/article/maine-kindergarten-student-dragged-school-bus/39989865>

² Sampson, Katie, (October 1, 2022). *Auburn student dragged by school bus after getting arm caught in door*. CBS13 News. Retrieved from <https://wgme.com/news/local/student-gets-caught-in-door-of-moving-school-bus>

Today, we have an opportunity to prevent children from being caught when exiting their school buses by placing a simple piece of technology on the school bus doors called an anti-pinch sensor.

Most recent data shows that in the United States, over 100,000 children are injured in bus-related accidents, many involving a child being pinched or dragged.³ In the country, there have also been other documented incidents that have questioned how we can improve bus safety.⁴ By installing sensors that stop movement when an object is detected, we can prevent these types of accidents from happening.

Maine is not new to adding things to our school buses to protect our children and prevent avoidable accidents. We have added cameras, swing-out stop signs, flashing lights and crossing arms. Adding sensors on school bus doors will add to the safety and protection of our children.

I urge the Committee to recommend an Ought to Pass report on LD 62. I am happy to answer any questions you have for me at this time or during the work session.

³ Ascencione. *Child dragged by School bus while the driver drives off – STOP with Smart Close*. (n.d). Retrieved from <https://ascencione.com/boy-girl-child-kid-dragged-school-bus-doors/>

⁴ Peter M. Lawrence, Kathleen Furneaux, *Dragging Threat – Nearly 20 Years Later: Students Trapped in Doors – A Five Second Cure to Eliminate this Threat*. (n.d) Retrieved from https://www.p12.nysed.gov/schoolbus/documents/pdf/school_bus_pupil_safety.pdf