



Troy D. Jackson
President of the Senate

THE MAINE SENATE
131st Legislature

3 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

**Testimony in Support of LD 1796
An Act to Protect Maine's Transit Employees**

**Presented to the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety
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Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety, my name is Troy Jackson. I serve as President of the Maine Senate and have the great honor of representing Aroostook County in the Legislature. I am here today to introduce LD 1796, "An Act to Protect Maine's Transit Employees."

Nobody should be in fear of assault when at work but frontline workers in every industry are facing increasingly dangerous and difficult conditions. It's not just a national issue — local transit worker unions have begun raising the alarm about what is happening in Maine.

The legislation before you today would better protect transit employees by

- Making assault on transit employees a Class C crime;
- Requiring the posting of penalties for assault of a transit employee;
- And requiring annual de-escalation training for transit employees.

It's a proposal that will provide comprehensive protection for our transit workers and work to reduce or diffuse these volatile situations.

When a transit worker is targeted, everyone using that transit and in the surrounding area is put in danger if a vehicle is out of the worker's control. Our laws already provide increased protections to other frontline workers, including law enforcement, emergency medical services, and firefighters. It's high time we extend these protections to transit workers. At least 30 other states have already adopted simpler laws — I think it's time we joined them.

In addition, the legislation seeks to deter this behavior by making clear that assaulting transit workers will result in increased penalties and by giving transit workers the tools to protect themselves and others around them. I'm hopeful this will move us toward a public transit system where everyone feels safe.

Thank you for your time today. I urge you to support this bill and will do my best to answer your questions. I'd just note that there are folks following me who have firsthand knowledge and experiences that may be better suited to speak on this issue.