

My name is Caitie Whelan, South Portland born and raised, and I write in support of LD 478, An Act to Reduce Maximum Speeds on Roads Close to Residences. This bill will make our roads safer for Maine kiddos, families, and neighborhoods in three ways.

First, LD 478 can help reduce the number of Mainers killed by speeding. Speeding accounted for nearly 25% of Maine traffic fatalities from 2018-2022.¹ By establishing smart speed limit parameters specifically in residential areas - as opposed to highways - this bill would decrease the chance of crashes in areas with a density of vulnerable road users, like kids walking or biking to school.

Second, LD 478 zeroes in on something we *can* control to make safer streets. Vehicles are getting bigger. In 2024, 58% of vehicle sales were SUVs;² one of the most popular vehicles - the F-150 truck³ - is 800 pounds heavier today⁴ than it was 30 years ago.⁵ While a sedan would likely hit a person in the legs, today's SUVs are more likely to hit them in the stomach, chest, or other vital organs,⁶ increasing the chances of death. Here in Maine, we can't control vehicle size, but we can control the speed of the high foot-traffic roads they drive on.

Third, the basic obligation of a municipality or state to its residents is safety. Families should be able to trust that their kids can safely get to school or a friend's house down the street. Folks who are elderly or have disabilities should be able to walk safely outside. LD 478 would bring us closer to fulfilling that basic obligation and making safer residential areas for all road users.

¹ Maine Bureau of Highway Safety Fatality Analysis: <https://www.maine.gov/dps/sites/maine.gov/dps/files/inline-files/Fatality%20Analysis%202018-2022.pdf>

² CBT News: <https://www.cbtnews.com/suv-market-share-hits-record-despite-affordability-crisis/#:~:text=SUVs%20continue%20to%20dominate%20the,consumer%20preferences%20toward%20larger%20vehicles.>

³ Edmunds: <https://www.edmunds.com/most-popular-cars/>

⁴ Car and Driver: <https://www.caranddriver.com/ford/f-150-2023>

⁵ Edmunds: <https://www.edmunds.com/ford/f-150/1991/features-specs/>

⁶ Outside Magazine: <https://www.outsideonline.com/outdoor-adventure/biking/suvs-trucks-deadly-cyclist-crashes/>