



# HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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*Testimony of Representative Amy Roeder introducing*

## **LD 431, An Act Regarding Driver's Licenses for Individuals in Foster Care**

*Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services*

Good morning, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services. My name is Amy Roeder, and I represent House District 23, which includes a portion of the great City of Bangor.

I am here today to introduce **LD 431, An Act Regarding Driver's Licenses for Individuals in Foster Care**.

This bill would help our foster youth obtain a driver's license. Specifically, it would make obtaining a license easier for those living without the care of a guardian.

You may remember learning to drive with your parents or family members. My own parents were great teachers, though I was a far from perfect student. I had the benefit of having driver's education through my public school as well, which was an economical way for most parents to make sure their children got the theoretical and practical drivers instruction that they needed. Though my driving skills left much to be desired and resulted in my parents and driver's ed instructor having significantly more gray hair by the time I got my license, there were few barriers for me to become a licensed driver. I was lucky.

My eldest son was also lucky. He came to me from the foster care system, just four days from turning 15. When he decided to take driver's ed, we had the means and the time to provide for that education and to help him log his hours. Not every foster child will have the same experience, and my bill attempts to address the inequities surrounding youth in care getting driver's education and their licenses.

As you can imagine, obtaining a driver's license is one way in which foster youth can gain greater independence, both socially and economically.

Transportation presents one of the biggest barriers for foster youth to access education, housing and employment, especially in our more rural parts of the state where public transportation may be nonexistent. Further, according to the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, foster youth with driver's licenses were 1.6 times as likely as their peers to attend school and nearly twice as likely to work.

In a state like ours, a license is necessary. Let's help address this barrier for our foster kids.

Thank you for your consideration. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.