



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts and Esteemed Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation, I am Mathew McIntyre and I humbly serve as the Representative for Maine's House District 18 comprising 16 towns and four Unorganized Territories spanning portions of Penobscot, Hancock and Washington counties. Today I offer testimony as the sponsor of **LD164**, "An Act to Exempt Authorized Emergency Vehicles from Tolls When Operating in an Official Capacity".

As I begin, I offer my presentation today as a direct result of engaging fire and EMS entities throughout District 18, and I serve proudly in carrying their voices here for your respectful consideration.

Per Maine Revised Statutes Title 23, Part 1, Subsection 1973, Paragraph 3 "*Tolls, or the fixing of tolls, is not rulemaking and is not subject to supervision or regulation by any state commission, board or agency*". Additionally, within Subsection 1973, Paragraph 5 establishes an exemption for "*Use by military*". I pose these facts as an example of the foundation for what I believe can certainly be categorized as common-sense legislation, and I ask that you join me in supporting this Act.

While fire and EMS providers throughout Maine are facing multiple challenges in terms of recruiting, retention, increasing training requirements and regulatory compliance, today's discussion shall be focused solely on addressing just one aspect; rapidly increasing operational budgets. This proposal, while seemingly minor in the grand scheme, represents one small step in the right direction.

As just one example, the Central Maine Highlands Fire and EMS District #1 provides essential services to eight Towns and portions of Unorganized Territories in both Penobscot and Hancock counties. Their small but loyal team of first responders protects the lives and property of over 4,000 regional souls for most of the year, with that number seeing significant jumps during peak "camping" season. They do all of this on what is an incredibly tight budget, and far too often Department Command is forced to make difficult decisions as where to make cuts, just to keep the doors open and the community protected. This one department annually budgets approximately \$1500 to cover expenses incurred through Maine Turnpike tolls, and I pose this to be utterly unnecessary, and inappropriate. While \$1500 may not seem like a lot, I assure you that Department Command would prefer to use it in more effective manners that directly benefit the community they serve, such as equipment, supplies or training. \$1500 equates to three pair of fire boots, or 3 fire helmets, or one Automated External Defibrillator (AED), or a video laryngoscope. I personally would consider these much more useful investments into the inventory of any department.

House District 18

Through bipartisan support of this common-sense legislation, we have an opportunity to reduce one small measure of budgetary struggle for the heroes that keep us safe. Additionally, in eliminating just a single unnecessary expense for our first responder departments, we will in turn help to reduce local property taxes. I for one would call this win-win, and I trust that you must clearly see it the same way.

I thank you for your time today, and look forward to continuing this discussion during future work sessions. It is imperative I mention that since I first drafted this testimony I have engaged several helpful and transparent conversations with key stakeholders, so if the legislation initially drafted by the Revisor's Office requires reasonable amendments, I am willing to participate in the work needed to get this effort to "Yes".

I will be glad to address any questions you may now have.