

**LD 1305, "An Act to Improve Access to Transportation to Work  
for Forestry Workers and Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers"**

**Joint Standing Committee on Transportation  
April 11, 2025**

Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts and Distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation:

I am Senator Trey Stewart; and I represent Senate District 2, which includes several communities in Penobscot and Aroostook Counties.

Maine heavily relies on temporary agricultural workers, known as H2A workers, from other countries for the majority of seasonal farm work. H2A workers are crucial to Maine's agriculture industry as there are not enough local workers available for planting and harvest. These dedicated individuals undergo rigorous background checks and an arduous application process, proving their reliability and commitment to working in Maine. Without these workers, Maine's agriculture industry would collapse.

As more states move toward using H2A workers, Maine must compete with the rest of the country for a very limited number of H2A visas. One disadvantage for H2A workers in Maine is their inability to obtain a Class B driver's license with a passenger endorsement, even if they have an equivalent license in their home country, due to Maine law. Buses are used to safely transport agricultural workers from their employer-provided housing to the fields. By allowing an H2A worker to transport fellow agricultural workers, it provides the driver with an additional income opportunity. It further benefits the entire crew as those hauling agricultural products from the fields to the processing facilities are not taken away from their primary job duties and can spend more time on the road. Furthermore, transporting agricultural workers in a bus is far safer than passenger vans, especially as bus drivers are required to have more training and testing to enhance their skills and safety rules. As other states allow H2A workers to be licensed to drive passenger buses, Maine is at a disadvantage for recruiting H2A workers.

I do wish to amend this bill to exclude forestry workers. The intention of this bill was only to provide an opportunity for H2A, not H2B, workers. H2A worker transportation is done primarily on public roads, not the forestry roads that require different driving ability and knowledge.

Maine's agricultural sector stands at a crossroads, and making this small change to empower H2A workers from every country to drive buses and transport fellow agricultural workers from their housing to the fields would make a significant difference. By allowing H2A workers to drive, we not only enhance the efficiency of our agricultural operations but also acknowledge the invaluable contributions these workers make to our community. Let's not stall the progress. It's time to steer Maine towards a brighter future where fair regulations foster a thriving agricultural landscape.

Thank you for your time and attention.