

Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts, members of the Transportation Committee, thank you for allowing me to speak today in favor of this very important legislation, LD 1457.

My name is Jeff Stevens and I am a Division Highway Supervisor for the Maine Turnpike Authority. I have worked directly on the highway for 30 years. During that time, I have seen a drastic change in driver behavior on our roads.

Primarily:

- Traffic volumes continue to increase.
- Vehicle speeds continue to increase.
- Driver inattention continues to increase.

This has become a recipe for disaster on our highways. Every day, in every work zone, our crews witness dangerous behavior behind the wheel. For example, we see drivers slam on their brakes when they come upon a cautious motorist—only to nearly be rear ended by someone speeding behind them. Or we see vehicles racing each other to get through the cone taper first. These driving behaviors are not only reckless, they're life-threatening—to the workers in the zone and to the drivers themselves.

Sadly, not all of these incidents end without consequences. I have personally witnessed many such situations, and I've seen co-workers seriously injured—either directly or indirectly—by motorists driving carelessly. In one heartbreaking case several years ago, a Turnpike employee lost his life after being hit in a work zone.

Just in 2023 and 2024 alone, five of our traffic control trucks have been hit on the Turnpike. One incident in particular, from December 2024, stands out. Despite more than a mile of construction signs and message boards warning drivers of road work ahead, one of our trucks was struck directly from behind by a fully loaded tractor-trailer. Based on the very short skid marks—shorter than the truck itself—it's clear the vehicle was traveling at full speed.

That crash deeply affected our entire crew. Two of our employees witnessed the collision in real time and are still grappling with the trauma to this day. The rest of us were shaken too, especially because we didn't immediately know whether our co-worker would survive.

Imagine being that crew—just having experienced a horrific crash, unsure if one of your own will live, and then being expected to clean up the aftermath while traffic continues to fly by. It's an impossible situation. Our minds are not in the right place to ensure our own safety, and that only increases the risk of another tragedy.

Thankfully our co-worker survived without known long term effects.

The truck and trailer-mounted attenuator were destroyed, but because of that safety equipment, he was able to walk away. Still, all the safety equipment in the world only works if the public does their part too

We need your help. We need the support of the public. And we need your help passing LD 1457.

This bill is a critical step forward in improving work zone safety—for us and for every driver on the road. All of our lives depend on it.

Thank you.



