



Pinny Beebe-Center
Senator, District 12

THE MAINE SENATE
132nd Legislature

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Augusta, Maine 04333

Testimony from Senator Pinny Beebe-Center introducing
LD 280, "An Act to Establish Lifetime Ferry Passes for Retired Maine State Ferry Employees,"
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation
April 29, 2025

Good afternoon Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation. My name is Pinny Beebe-Center, and I represent Senate District 12, which includes all of Knox County except for the towns of Washington and Isle Au Haut. Thank you for the opportunity to present my bill, LD 280, "An Act to Establish Lifetime Ferry Passes for Retired Maine State Ferry Employees."

This idea for legislation came from a conversation I had with one of my constituents, Jim Dicky of Vinalhaven, around a year ago now. Jim is a retired ferry employee. He loved working for the ferry service, and has talked to me at length of how fulfilling the work was and all the connections he has made over the years. However, Jim was running into a problem. Jim recalled that in the early 2000s, he, and many of his colleagues, lost a benefit that had been instrumental to their lives, free vehicle ferry passes to the mainland. These passes allowed Jim to get back to the mainland for doctors' appointments, groceries or gas for his vehicles.

As the cost of living continuously rises, Jim reached out asking if it would be possible to reintroduce this benefit again. You will hear from Jim later today as well, who will be able to explain more than I can.

Then there is the issue of price. We already saw an increase in ticket prices last year, with more increases expected this year as well. The more trips you take, the more these tickets really add up. When many retirees are living off of Social Security, these tickets add another expense onto what already is a pricey visit off the island. Removing this would create less financial strain for travelers and allow them to focus more on the reasons behind their trip, rather than the cost of it.

Now, I believe changes need to be made to the bill as written, in order to make sure it has the intended effect. I would like to put in an amendment so that this benefit would be made available to **only retirees who are island residents**. The whole point of this legislation is to have island residents be able to make it back to mainland for appointments and essentials, not give every retiree a few free trips out to the islands. Jim has told me this is how the original benefit worked, so it makes sense to restore it to how it was. I hope to be able to discuss this more during the work session.

I thank you all for your time and consideration, I invite you to direct your questions to any of the Maine State Ferry Service retirees who have come here to testify today.