



MAINE AFL-CIO

A Union of Unions Standing for Maine Workers

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Testimony of Adam Goode, Maine AFL-CIO Legislative & Political Director, In Support of LD 2062, "An Act to Enhance the Safety of Public Transit Bus Operators Through the Installation of Vehicle Security Barriers"

Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation, my name is Adam Goode. I'm the Legislative and Political Director of the Maine AFL-CIO. We represent 40,000 working people in the state of Maine. We work to improve the lives and working conditions of our members and all working people. We testify in support of LD 2062.

LD 2062 protects transit employees by requiring public transit agencies that operate public transportation services in Maine to install vehicle security barriers that enclose the public transit bus operator's workstation and prevent the unwanted entry of individuals, fluids and objects into the workstation.

Bus drivers in Maine, as well as other transit workers, provide important public services, including cutting down on traffic congestion, limiting greenhouse gas emissions and assisting people in getting to and from work. Their work has become increasingly dangerous, and increased protections from security barriers will help provide protections for both transit workers and members of the public.

In recent years there has been a nationwide increase in violent attacks towards transit workers themselves and on transit in general.^{1,2} Both transit users and workers have to worry about being verbally, physically or even sexually assaulted when they are doing their job. Local unions in Maine have brought this issue to our attention. We anticipate that they will share their concerns about what they see on the ground in Maine. In addition to concerns about violence in Maine workplaces, there have been consistent national news stories about violent situations on public transit, including stabbings³, operators being punched, spit on, robbed and verbal assaults.

Transit workers being exposed to verbal and physical assaults results in lost time and lost revenue. In addition to the obvious dangers assaults pose to workers and the public, lost time results in staffing challenges and has negative impacts on employee recruitment and retention. Transit workers consistently state that workplace safety issues are a top area of concern and we have seen the Community Connector in Bangor limit services by stopping all weekend options in both 2022 and 2024.⁴ Transit systems also lose revenue when a bus has to divert or pause a regular route to deal with an incident.⁵

It is important to remember that the folks driving buses and carrying out all other forms of transit work need to be free from distraction in order to protect the public from any accident. This is about both protecting the transit worker and protecting the safety of the public. It is wrong for

anyone to be the victim of assault on the job, and the threats posed by this type of violence are made all the more important to address given that in most cases they jeopardize public safety through the harm posed to a person responsible for safely moving a vehicle.

Unions very much want to make this a workable solution that helps protect bus safety and improves recruitment and retention. For that reason, we feel it is important to include the part of the bill that requires consultation with labor organizations representing public transit bus operators and joint labor-management safety committees.

This bill is an important part of protecting transit workers and public safety. We ask that you support LD 2062.

¹<https://www.cbsnews.com/chicago/news/union-violence-cta-buses-driver-shortage/>

²<https://www.ktnv.com/news/renewed-attention-for-transit-police-after-another-incident-on-board-rtc-bus>

³<https://www.richmondsentinel.ca/article-detail/33624/transit-association-says-more-police-security-needed-on-city-buses-trains>

⁴<https://www.bangordailynews.com/2024/09/24/bangor/bangor-government/community-connector-saturday-bus-service-suspended-again/>

⁵<https://calgaryherald.com/news/local-news/code-blue-transit-union-says-its-reviewing-up-to-10-staff-assault-cases-each-month>