

**Testimony of Sean Binette, Amalgamated Transit Union Local 714  
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 Sean Binette, and I am testifying on behalf of Amalgamated Transit Union, Local 714. I serve as shop steward for Greater Portland Metro and have worked as a bus operator for 7 years. I am here today to testify in support of LD 2062.

Assaults on transit workers take many forms – and until recently some of the most serious ones were not required to be reported to the FTA by public transit agencies. Some of the ~~kinds~~ <sup>kinds</sup> of abuses that public transit workers face but did not meet that threshold include stabbing, spitting, and hitting and kicking.

Any of these abuses could be stopped by a proper floor to ceiling barrier like the ones required by this bill. Because the barrier fully encloses the bus operator’s workstation, it would prevent people from entering our workspace and spitting or throwing fluids or other objects at us.

Because many assaults occur on moving vehicles, they compromise the safety of not only the bus operator but also their passengers, pedestrians and others on the roadway.

Currently, most bus operators are left unprotected in the driver’s seat or are forced to work with only a flimsy plexiglass “spit shield” installed during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic. These shields are easily pushed aside and are made from inferior materials that are prone to scratching and glare, which can reduce an operator’s visibility.

You’ll hear some personal accounts about assaults on transit workers today, but I’d like to provide you with some data. Federal Transit Administration (FTA) data indicates that the rate of assaults on public transit operators nearly tripled from

2008 to 2022. More than 11,000 incidents of transit worker assault were reported in 2023 alone. According to data from the National Transit Database, there are an average of 42 assaults on transit workers every day nationwide.

Safety barrier technology has rapidly developed in recent years, and ATU has worked through labor-management partnerships to test and implement modern barrier designs that protect bus operators from assault without impeding visibility. Because transit workers have expertise at which barriers will both protect and allow operators to clearly see in their surroundings, this legislation utilizes these same safety committees which include members of both transit agency management and the union to test and procure the best models of barriers.

Rather than waiting for more assaults to occur, several transit agencies have taken proactive action and installed modern floor-to-ceiling barriers to protect bus operators. Los Angeles (LA) Metro, for example, installed floor-to-ceiling barriers in every one of the over 2,000 buses in its fleet. Operator assaults radically decreased.

Legislators in other states have already taken action on this issue- Nevada and Illinois both passed bills requiring barriers in public transit buses.

Now Maine has the chance to support public transit workers like me. We urge the committee to support LD 2062.