



University of Maine System Testimony In Opposition to LD 2137, *An Act to Modify Provisions of Law Governing Parking Enforcement on Property Accessible to the Public*
Presented by UMS Chief External & Governmental Affairs Officer Samantha Warren
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Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation: My name is Sam Warren and I am the Chief External & Governmental Affairs Officer for the University of Maine System (UMS).

Our System strongly opposes LD 2137, which would restrict our use of modern parking tools; undermine public safety, campus access, and our ability to generate the revenue necessary to maintain critical infrastructure; and shift new costs to students and Maine taxpayers.

Maine's public universities are burdened by **\$1.8 billion in deferred maintenance**, the result of decades of State underinvestment and our commitment to student affordability and our workforce. More than half of our built space has not been meaningfully renovated in at least 50 years, and deteriorating campus roadways and parking areas also desperately need investment. For example, at the University of Southern Maine (USM), parking-related deferred maintenance exceeds \$11 million.

Some UMS universities charge for parking to promote access and to generate revenue to partially offset the costs of operating and maintaining related infrastructure, including garage construction, ADA compliance, resurfacing and sealing, plowing, safety lighting, emergency call box installation, and transportation alternatives.

Enforcement is essential to effective parking operations, compliance with posted rules, and fairness, ensuring that individuals purchase the appropriate parking services, maintaining traffic flow and turnover so parking is available for those accessing programming, protecting accessible spaces and emergency responder access, and preventing obstructive parking. This is especially important at our public university campuses in Portland and Gorham, where demand for parking greatly exceeds USM's 3,000+ spaces.

To address the increasing need for parking and reduce congestion in surrounding neighborhoods, USM constructed a new 638-space parking garage on its growing Portland campus in 2023 and contracted through a competitive process with a third-party vendor to implement digital parking and enforcement. While these systems utilize technology, every potential violation is reviewed and verified by a human, in full compliance with Maine law. Currently, a timely written notice of citation is provided either by mail within eight days of the violation or by email within four days to those among the 29,000+ registered users who have opted in to electronic notification.

In an effort to **further enhance the user experience and access to parking**, USM and its vendor (now ParkEngage) continue to implement improvements informed by campus and community feedback and consistent with P.L. 2025, Ch. 350. These include improved

informational signage, extended grace periods, expanded payment options, including kiosks, pay-by-text, and at lot exits, and dismissal of a first citation upon request. The result has been a **more seamless experience for those utilizing the university's parking services and fewer citations**. In the first six months of FY26, USM's vendor processed more than 336,000 parking transactions, with fewer than 2.7% resulting in a citation that the violator was expected to pay.

LD 2137 would undermine that progress by prohibiting reliable mailed and electronic notification and requiring printed tickets to be affixed to vehicles at the time of the violation. This outdated approach is less safe, environmentally regressive as paper notices are frequently lost or damaged by weather, and significantly more expensive to administer.

Specifically, USM's current vendor manages and pays all relevant parking services and enforcement costs (e.g., payment kiosks, online payment systems, cameras, software, signage, transaction review, citation processing, mailing, customer service staffing, etc.) and splits revenue generated through parking services and enforcement with the university. Even with this innovative public-private partnership, USM's parking services do not break even, though the integration of technology has reduced losses. In FY25, USM's total parking and transportation expenses were \$2.94 million, while revenue was \$1.52 million — **reflecting a shortfall of \$1.42 million for our public university**.

Enacting **LD 2137 would put USM's parking operations in deeper deficit**. The university would need to transition away from this vendor — potentially putting the System in breach of contract — and assume the full costs of parking services and enforcement. We estimate that this would require a new and ongoing State appropriation of at least \$500,000 for parking attendants, administrative staff, and operations and maintenance, as well as a large one-time appropriation for installation of parking services equipment, supplies, and gated infrastructure.

Furthermore, **the current parking technology supports public safety**. USM Police have easy access to the permit holder's contact information so they can contact them directly in the event of a snow ban, need for a welfare check, or other emergency situation, thus avoiding automatic towing, disruption, and added expense.

Our System shares the sponsor's stated goal of protecting consumers, and we remain committed to continuously improving the parking and other services our universities provide to the public. However, LD 2137 goes too far. It compromises safety, access, and operational efficiency; increases student and taxpayer costs; and removes our public institutions' ability to effectively manage limited resources by responsibly using widely adopted, human-verified technology.

I would note that in May, your colleagues on the Health Coverage, Insurance, and Financial Services Committee **rejected a similar proposal** to require written notices be affixed to vehicles at the time of the parking violation (LD 1794). Furthermore, last March, your colleagues on the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee voted unanimously to **uphold our public universities' parking enforcement authority and current practices** (LD 198). We urge you to follow their lead.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I welcome your questions.