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## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF

L.D. 2159

### AN ACT TO REQUIRE SCHOOL BUSES TO BE EQUIPPED WITH AND TO USE SCHOOL BUS CROSSING ARMS

January 29, 2026

Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts, and members of the Transportation Committee, I am Eileen King, Deputy Executive Director for Maine School Management Association, testifying on behalf of the legislative committees of the Maine School Boards Association and Maine School Superintendents Association in support of L.D. 2159, An Act to Require School Buses to Be Equipped with and to Use School Bus Crossing Arms.

In the past few months, Maine has seen two tragic accidents involving students and school buses – something that no family, school, or community should ever have to endure. Safety is the top priority of every educator across our state, and we must do everything possible to make sure each Maine child and family feels safe.

We believe requiring the use of school bus crossing arms is a logical and important safety measure that will better protect every Maine child. These devices provide an additional visual and physical cue that helps guide students to cross at a safe distance in front of the bus and increases the driver's visual awareness when the school bus is stopped. We agree that this safety equipment across the state strengthens protections for students.

While we want this equipment installed as fast as possible, we would urge the committee to consider amending the bill and providing a timeline for implementation that is realistic and operationally feasible for school districts.

If this bill were passed and signed tomorrow as an emergency measure, every school bus would be required, that same day, to have a crossing arm. However, retrofitting existing buses will require some time for schools to purchase equipment, schedule installations, inspections and training, while still ensuring that buses remain on the road each day to transport students safely to and from school.

We believe a realistic timeline would be to require crossing arms in all Maine school buses by the first day of the next school year, or approximately September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2026.

Our office has spoken with the bill sponsor, and Rep. Geiger was open to such an amendment. We believe that phased in implementation would allow districts to comply with the law without compromising daily transportation services or student access to school.