

State of Maine
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Testimony of Rob Susi, Director of the Maine School Safety Center

In Support of: L.D. 2159

An Act to Require School Buses to Be Equipped with and to Use School Bus Crossing Arms

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation

Sponsored by: Representative Geiger

Date: January 29, 2026

Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts, and Distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation:

My name is Rob Susi, the Director of the Maine School Safety Center, and I am here today representing the Maine Department of Education (DOE), speaking in support of LD 2159, An Act to Require School Buses to Be Equipped with and to Use School Bus Crossing Arms. This bill proposes that all school buses be equipped with a school bus crossing arm and requires the operator of a school bus to activate the school bus crossing arm while the bus is stopped to receive or discharge passengers.

The Maine Department of Education (DOE) values student safety and appreciates the efforts of the Sponsor in designing this bill. As you are all aware, Governor Mills issued an Executive Order establishing the Maine School Transportation Safety Commission. The goal of this Commission is to comprehensively review school transportation safety regulations, rules, and best practices and provide updated guidance to the field. Further, the Governor has announced she intends to include \$4.3 million in the supplemental budget to support the enhancement of school bus safety measures.

This legislation is timely, important, and should be considered carefully to ensure that the intent can be carried through into implementation. The Maine DOE offers the following information to support the Committee in its deliberations:

- There are approximately 1,120 buses in the State of Maine that would require retrofitting of the cross arm. The upper estimate, which varies by manufacturer, is approximately \$3,000 per bus.
- The crossing arm cannot be installed on buses that do not have air (used for air brakes). Maine has approximately 75 school buses with no air. In order to comply with this bill, some school administrative units (SAUs) will have to replace buses.
- An additional consideration for SAUs is the need to plan for routine and emergency maintenance of crossing arms, specifically during cold weather, and establish contingency plans for when a bus does not have an operating crossing arm.

- The National Congress of School Transportation (NCST) recently voted to keep crossing control arms as a recommended option in the national model specifications, rather than a mandatory requirement.

The Maine Department of Education is in support of LD 2159, An Act to Require School Buses to Be Equipped with and to Use School Bus Crossing Arms. I am happy to take questions from the Committee. Since this bill pertains to specific content about school buses, I will answer what I can and collect questions I cannot answer for response from the DOE prior to the work session. A representative from the Department can also be available to provide additional information at the work sessions on this bill.