

LD 2159

Jennifer Foster

Thank you for allowing me this time to speak. I am honored and very nervous to be up here in front of all of you.

My voice may shake and it may crackle but today it will be heard for Brayden for Simon for all of the children of Maine. Today I am their voice.

Not one but two tragedies, just 26 days apart, stole the life of Brayden and then Simon. These tragedies occurred in two separate communities in our beautiful State of Maine. Bringing two separate families to their knees asking, "Why Brayden" "Why Simon".

There truly is no answer and no words to make emptiness and loss easier for anyone to digest.

I personally couldn't wrap my head around these tragedies. I kept asking myself how did this happen not once but twice.

What I do know is,

This could have been my family.

Your family.

Your neighbor's family.

It has become crystal clear that something is terribly faulted with our bus safety and changes need to be made. We don't want another family to experience this heartache. Another empty seat in a classroom where a child full of life and dreams once sat.

This mission isn't about money, it isn't about politics, and it isn't about placing blame. It's about making changes.

Long overdue changes to ensure our buses are equipped with the same basic safety features that are on our own vehicles today. The basic safety standard for school buses does not match today's 2026 current technology.

I am asking for this bill LD 2159 to be amended to include safety features such as cross arm bar (that cannot be disabled), anti-pinch door sensors, 360 cameras outside the bus. These safety measures would help protect all children in Maine and keep them safer than they are today.

No one in this room can say that these 2 boys' deaths could not have been prevented if the buses had these features to begin with. Their deaths should not be in vain.

While school buses are considered "safe" by our current standards they are still lacking in up-to-date safety features. The highest risks occur outside the bus during the loading/unloading process.

It is our job to make sure that our most precious cargo, our children, our grandchildren arrive to their classroom in the morning and then to their loved ones in the afternoon.

You have heard my voice today and I am asking for you to join me and those standing with me and be a voice for Brayden, for Simon, for all of Maines children and vote in favor of these changes.

Let Maine set an example for the rest of our country by stepping up and putting these safety features into law so that our future leaders, Maine's children and their safety is our top priority. Let's make Maines school buses the safest in our nation.

On behalf of the families here today we would be humbled if you would consider honoring the boys and naming this law, "The Brayden and Simon Lewis law".

Thank you for hearing my voice.