

March 3, 2026

To the Members of the Maine Legislature's Labor Committee,

I'm Tyler J. Brown of Waterville and I work as a Transportation Crew Leader for the MaineDOT out of the Fairfield shed. I'm working at my job today and have a lot going on right now with the deaths of my father and stepbrother. So instead of appearing in person today, I'm providing this statement as a private citizen in support of expanding the State's death benefit to include highway maintenance workers at the MaineDOT.

On the morning of January 13, 2026, I ended up working in Augusta -- not the Waterville worksite on Interstate 95. So, I wasn't there that morning when my Dad, James Brown, and my stepbrother, Dwayne Campbell, were killed on the job.

I literally followed in the footsteps of both my Dad, who joined the DOT back in 2012, and Dwayne, who joined in 2001. I started working for the DOT in November of 2021 as a Transportation Worker and promoted to Transportation Crew Leader three years later, in November 2024.

Out of everybody in my life, my Dad and Dwayne were my mentors. If I needed help, if I needed to get anything off my chest, or if I needed advice, those are the people I would go to. Even now. I'm staying at my Dad's house. If something breaks, I can't call him.

Me and Dwayne were close. We didn't really know each other too much until he came to the Fairfield shed. We obviously knew each other -- after my parents divorced when I was 14, my Mom married his dad -- but we grew a relationship at the Fairfield shed. We grew really close and gave each other advice.

My Dad, he was my go-to when it came to anything. He and Dwayne weren't afraid to give me advice even if it's not what I wanted to hear. They were the two biggest people I was close to in my life and the only people I trusted to go to with anything.

With them gone, at first it was just like everything didn't feel real. It took me probably a couple days to understand what happened and after that, I just knew that the responsibility of all my Dad's things, his house, his cars, his payments, his bills, that responsibility was on me. Obviously, I was more than happy to take care of that. Me and my Dad had talked about if anything ever happened, it would be up to me.

Basically when it comes down to this bill on the State's death benefits, my biggest thing on it would be after a death like this, it kind of just gets thrown into the lap of someone like me, anyone who has to take care of things after the passing of someone in the family. It's just the hardships that come with it, trying to pay all the bills, trying to make sure things stay afloat. I

was already living paycheck to paycheck before all of this. Now, I'm also having to pay for all my Dad's things. It's not easy. Everything costs money.

Here's what the State has done so far for us. The State did end up giving each family a \$4,000 check to cover funeral costs. My portion of that check, the whole \$4,000, went toward my Dad being cremated because that's what he wanted, and everything that came with that, the box I chose. The State also said that once estate representatives are named, they will send each family a \$3,000 check. So, the total State payments will be \$7,000 per family.

In terms of taking time off to grieve, the State provided me with 40 hours of bereavement for my Dad and 40 hours of bereavement for Dwayne – all as required by my union contract. The bereavement time was super-helpful, but the first week was basically trying to figure everything out, gathering paperwork, bills, doing as much as I could do moving forward. The second week was more me, kind of just taking some time. I still have 16 hours of bereavement time. I came back a day and a half early. I wanted to keep myself busy.

But when it comes down to bills and stuff like that, I've had to pay for everything. I recently started paying for Dad's CMP, anything that I found that I had access to and an account number for. I made those phone calls and started making those payments. There's a couple I didn't have account numbers for, so I had to say, "hey, I'm going to pay \$100 toward this; just don't shut off the electricity." I can't do much with that until I'm appointed representative of the estate – I have a meeting next week. I'm taking care of Dad's house. It's been really cold this past month. I've had to keep his pellet stove running. That's in addition to maintaining my own apartment. I basically haven't been to my apartment at all, just making sure the pipes don't burst. I recently got his heating switched over to my name with Irving so we can get refills.

I think the biggest point would be, for me, and I'm sure I could speak for Dwayne's family, too, is that even with my bereavement leave, none of us really felt like we had time to grieve. When someone dies, money is always going to be a factor, bills still need to be paid, things still need to be taken care of. If the State's death benefit were amended to include highway maintenance workers like my Dad and Dwayne, that would be a huge benefit to have things covered. It would give us time to grieve and have that safety net. Thank you for taking the time to hear my story.