

Good afternoon, Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and members of the Labor Committee.

My name is Robin Upton-Sukeforth, I am speaking as the spouse of a DOT transportation worker II. I am testifying in support of Representative Roeder's amendment to LD669, by adding Highway Maintenance Workers to MRS Title 25 Chapter 195.

My spouse has worked in the road construction business since 1974, that is a very long time. First for private companies, paving many highways, state routes or town roads in the Midcoast area. He was the foreman when Route 1 in Wiscasset was first paved at night. At one point, he was asked to consult on the first night-paving project in Massachusetts. He was the foreman of the paving crew for 20 years and I can tell you his greatest pride was leaving private employment with no workplace injuries for crew under his leadership.

When my husband went to work for the State of Maine, he started as a TWI on one of the busiest routes in Maine: I-295 Topsham through Portland. His first season, he was pushing back the left shoulder with that massive plow truck, all safety signage in place, etc. A passenger car decided the right-side lane was moving too slow, doing what any person in a hurry would do, accelerated and proceeded to pass all the cars by taking the left lane. When it became evident that the passenger car would have rear-ended the State plow truck, the driver cut back to the right, clipping the right wing of the State plow truck. My husband witnessed the car do a flip, then fly over the DOT truck going from the right to the left, the car's roof peeled back and finally landed in the median strip. When all was done, the driver narrowly escaped being decapitated. God watches over fools and children; no one was killed or severely injured.

DOT crews frequently work in high-speed zones: fixing guard rails, patching potholes, fixing bridge joints and removing dead animals and other large obstacles from median strips and shoulders. The DOT maintenance workers face dangerous conditions for every minute, and every season they are on an open road or highway.

Despite multiple signs warning of work zones, reduced speed limits and lane closures, the public traveling through work zones MIGHT drop their speed a token 5 miles from 70 plus. The public forgets a passenger car, personal truck or semi-trailer cannot stop on a dime; their velocity and tonnage are deadly.

The January 2026 deaths of two DOT employees was a tragedy that demonstrates the inherent danger of working road construction.

It is a reminder that when I kiss my husband as he leaves for his job, my goodbye and wish to be safe is more than rote. It is a reminder of the danger he faces in the next 8 + hours.

**I speak in favor of Representative Roeder's amendment to include Highway Maintenance Workers for enhanced benefits in the event of death in the line of duty.**

**Thank you for your time and consideration on this incredibly important issue. I'd be happy to answer any questions.**