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**March 3, 2026**

**Testimony of Robert McFerren  
Maine Department of Transportation  
Before the 132<sup>nd</sup> Legislature, Joint Standing Committee on Labor**

**In Support to the Proposed Amendment of LD 669**

*An Act Regarding Labor*

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Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor, my name is Robert McFerren and I am here to testify in support on behalf of the Mills Administration of the proposed amendment to LD 669, which would extend line-of-duty death benefits to employees of the Maine Department of Transportation who perform highway maintenance work under Title 23, Section 53.

On January 13, 2026, two MaineDOT employees tragically lost their lives while performing work on Interstate 95 in Waterville. They left for work that morning to serve the people of Maine—to keep our roads clear, safe, and passable in the middle of winter. They did not come home.

Their loss is a stark and heartbreaking reminder that the men and women who maintain our transportation infrastructure face real and immediate danger every day. They work in all weather conditions—snowstorms, freezing rain, dense fog, and the darkness of early morning hours. They work inches away from live traffic traveling at highway speeds. They clear accidents, repair guardrails, patch pavement, remove debris, and respond to emergencies so that the traveling public can get home safely.

We often and rightly recognize the risks taken by law enforcement officers, firefighters, corrections officers, and emergency medical services personnel. This amendment acknowledges that MaineDOT highway maintenance workers accept comparable risks in the performance of their duties. Their job is not performed in controlled environments. It is performed on active roadways, in unpredictable conditions, with little margin for error.

While this amendment would ensure that Department of Transportation personnel engaged in “Highway Maintenance Work” are included among those public servants whose families are eligible for death benefits when the unthinkable happens in the line of duty, we respectfully ask the committee to consider whether the proposed language should be broadened to reflect the full scope of risk faced by employees of the Maine Department of Transportation. “Highway Maintenance Work” positions as defined in the bill, do not represent the only MaineDOT

employees who routinely encounter danger in the performance of their duties. Surveyors working along active roadways, project managers overseeing field operations, appraisers accessing roadside properties, bridge inspectors operating at height over traffic and water, utility coordinators working within construction zones, and construction inspectors stationed daily in active work zones all face significant and sometimes unpredictable hazards. In light of these realities, MaineDOT recommends that the committee consider shifting the statutory framework from one based strictly on job classification to one grounded in job function. Language such as “those killed in the line of duty while engaged in work within the right of way” would more accurately and equitably capture the range of employees exposed to roadway risk.

Finally, we recognize that MaineDOT employees are not the only state workers whose duties place their lives and safety at risk. It could reasonably be argued that employees in other Maine State Government departments face comparable hazards and may warrant similar consideration. We encourage the Committee to reflect on this broader principle as it evaluates how best to structure and apply these important protections.

The events of January 13, 2026, in Waterville underscore the urgency and moral clarity of this amendment. Two families are grieving today because their loved ones were doing exactly what we ask them to do—protecting the safety of others. We cannot undo that loss. But we can ensure that their service is honored with the same recognition and protection afforded to others who face life-threatening risks in public service.

MaineDOT respectfully urges the Committee to support the measures proposed in the amended version of LD 669. This proposal is a fair and necessary step to recognize the sacrifices made by MaineDOT employees and to provide meaningful support to their families in the event of a line-of-duty death. Thank you for your consideration and for your commitment to the safety and well-being of all who serve the people of Maine.