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February 25, 2021

Testimony of Meghan Russo  
Maine Department of Transportation  
Before the 130<sup>th</sup> Legislature, Joint Standing Committee on Transportation

**In Opposition**

**LD 252**

*An Act To Expand Training Opportunities for Department of Transportation Workers*

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Senator Diamond, Representative Martin, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation, my name is Meghan Russo, and I am the Legislative Liaison for the Maine Department of Transportation. MaineDOT respectfully opposes LD 252, *An Act To Expand Training Opportunities for Department of Transportation Workers*.

MaineDOT's opposition to LD 252 stems from the fact that it would earmark funds within our Highway Fund Budget. LD 252 proposes a Highway Fund allocation of \$599,870 in fiscal year 2021-2022 for five Driver Trainer positions within MaineDOT's Bureau of Maintenance and Operations. The bill further proposes an allocation of \$1.2 million in fiscal year 2022-2023 for another five Driver Trainer positions. That would create ten additional Driver Trainer positions over the next two years.

The duties of the Driver Trainers include training, mentoring, and preparing students for attainment of their Class A and Class B commercial driver licenses. The position also plays a prominent role in internal certifications for our snow-fighters along with certifying employees on a variety of equipment such as lifts, graders, bulldozers, and boom trucks.

Currently, MaineDOT has seven Driver Trainer positions. Four of our five Maintenance and Operations regions each has one Driver Trainer. There are two Driver Trainer positions in Region 4 because of the number of employees there. Our Fleet Services also has one Driver Trainer.

While the duties associated with the Driver Trainer positions have experienced backlogs in recent years, some of this due to COVID, this backlog has improved recently. This is much in

thanks to the Transportation Worker stipend that was implemented in 2018, which also resulted in reduced employee turnover.

The addition of ten Driver Trainer positions within MaineDOT would leave the department overstaffed at this position. MaineDOT's employees are – without a question – our most important asset. We are always looking for ways to expand training opportunities and, of course, would want to address a problem we felt existed. We do, however, believe that the number of Driver Trainers within each region is adequate to handle the current workload.

For these reasons, we ask you to vote against LD 252. Thank you for your time, and I would be happy to address any questions the committee might have.

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