



MLCC Testimony in support of LD 1170, “Resolve, to Promote Passenger Rail for Commuters”

Senator Chipman, Representative Williams, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation, my name is Francis Eanes and I live in Auburn, Maine, and I’m the Executive Director of the Maine Labor Climate Council.

I submit this testimony in favor of LD 1170, “Resolve, to Promote Passenger Rail for Commuters,” and to suggest some minor amendments to the bill that we believe would make it even stronger.

The Maine Labor Climate Council is a coalition of 20 labor unions and labor organizations dedicated to fighting climate change and broader forms of inequality at the same time. To this end, we are happy to support Representative O’Neil’s Resolve.

Passenger rail service is an energy-efficient and effective means of public transportation. Its expansion and operational improvement is necessary for the state to meet its climate and energy goals, as well as improving connectivity among Maine communities and between Maine and southern New England. Anything that improves existing service such as the line between Brunswick and Boston moves us in the right direction. For these reasons we support this Resolve for the Department of Transportation to study the issue.

In our support for Representative O’Neil’s Resolve, we would also like to suggest some friendly amendments that, if included, would in our view strengthen it.

Recruiting and retaining a highly skilled workforce is critical for any industry, and a particularly acute issue in the rail sector, which nationally has seen sustained labor shortages over the last few years due to a variety of factors, including the wages and working conditions of the employees who build, maintain, and operate the rail lines and service for both freight and passenger sectors. Any expansion of service frequency, changes to scheduling, or other operational changes aimed at improving overall service could have impacts – both positive and negative – on recruitment of a future workforce and/or the retention of the existing workforce, and ought to be captured in this study. At the same time, rail workers themselves are a wealth of knowledge about the strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improving on the status quo.

Amending Section 1 with the following text could address both of these important issues in ways that could strengthen the depth, integrity, and impact of the study:

Section 1: That the Department of Transportation shall, in coordination with the Northern New England 3 Passenger Rail Authority and consultation with the labor organizations that represent employees on the rail line in question, conduct a study to evaluate improvements to the passenger rail service between Brunswick and Boston ...

A....

B....

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J. Evaluate the impacts of proposed changes on the total number of temporary and permanent jobs created or maintained, and on the ability of rail operators to recruit and retain a highly skilled workforce.

Thank you for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Francis Eanes". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "F" and "E".

Francis Eanes
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