



To: Committee on Transportation

From: Ezra Sassaman, Maine Youth for Climate Justice

Date: April 12, 2023

Re: Testimony in favor of LD 1170: Resolve, to Promote Passenger Rail for Commuters

Senator Chipman, Representative Williams, and the members of the Committee on Transportation, my name is Ezra Sassaman. I am writing as a representative for Maine Youth for Climate Justice (MYCJ), a coalition of over 460 youth from across the state who are fighting for bold climate action and a just transition to a livable future in Maine. I am writing in favor of LD 1170.

Taking commuter rail and other forms of public transportation seriously is an important aspect of climate justice. Roughly 76% of Mainers use a single occupancy vehicle as their primary mode of transportation, while only 0.4% of Mainers use public transit. As it currently stands, 54% of Maine's carbon emissions stem from the transportation sector.¹ To reach our climate action goals as a state, we must promote low-carbon transportation solutions such as passenger rail.

In addition to the benefits to the climate, commuter rail represents an affordable option for low-income Mainers. The monthly costs of a personal vehicle, essentially the default for Maine transportation, averages to \$894 for a new vehicle or \$515 for a used car driven 15,000 miles annually.² In comparison, recent US public transit costs averaged between \$150 per month for

¹ Dr. Geoff Morrison et al., "[Executive Summary: Maine Clean Transportation Roadmap](#)", *GEO/GOPIF*, December 2021.

² Whitney Vandiver and Shannon Bradley, "[What is the Total Cost of Owning a Car](#)", *Nerdwallet*, March 2023.

commuter rail.³ The resulting cost savings for commuter rail represent around a 71-83% decrease in comparison to average car travel.

The Downeaster is already vital to many who travel from southern Maine to the Boston area for work and life. In the current situation, however, employers and commuters alike cannot depend on passenger rail for commuting on a daily basis.

Passing LD 1170 would be a first step towards meeting the needs of a broader and more diverse population of travelers and commuters.

Youth in Maine and around the world will bear the costs of legislative inaction on the climate crisis and transportation access inequity. If decision-makers continue to ignore these crises, these interconnected problems will persist and mutually worsen each other for us and future generations.

For the above reasons, our coalition, Maine Youth for Climate Justice, urges you to vote ought-to-pass on LD 1170. Thank you.

³ Erick Burgueño Salas, "[Average monthly passes fare in U.S. public transportation between 2017 and 2019, by mode](#)", *Statista*, May 2022.