

Testimony from the Maine Immigrants' Rights Coalition regarding:
LD 1170: Resolve, to Promote Passenger Rail for Commuters

Sponsored By: Representative Maggie O'Neal
Public Hearing: Wednesday, April 12, 2023 at 1:00pm

Dear Chair Chipman, Chair Williams, and Members of the Committee on Transportation:

My name is Tobin Williamson and I am the Advocacy Manager with the Maine Immigrants' Rights Coalition (MIRC), a statewide network of almost 100 member organizations working to enhance the lives of Maine's immigrant communities. MIRC works to advance systemic changes in Maine through collaborative advocacy to ensure that voices of the state's large, diverse, and growing immigrant communities are heard.

Many members of Maine's immigrant communities utilize public transportation for a variety of reasons. Some cannot afford a car (plus gas, upkeep, insurance, parking, and so on). Some have not yet passed a driving test and/or do not have a valid driver's license. Others have a general preference for using mass transit opposed to driving a car. Whatever the reason, many of Maine's immigrants could conceivably use improved train service in addition to existing bus services.

The passenger rail corridor between Brunswick and Boston is nice but there is so much room for improvement. With more trip frequency and reliability, more potential passengers would consider using the train as an alternative to driving their private automobiles; in addition to environmental benefits, this could ease traffic congestion and parking concerns. Improved scheduling for optimal trip times would make it easier for local riders to use the train for practical daily transportation. In addition to better options of commuting for work, rail passengers could utilize these proposed improvements for better access to visiting friends and family, shopping, medical appointments, education opportunities, and leisure activities.

For Maine's immigrants, better train service could be particularly impactful. They would have better options for job opportunities. They would be able to get to English language or workforce training classes easier. They would have more access to healthcare for themselves and/or their families. Indeed, passenger rail has the potential to be transformative for hundreds of Maine immigrants. Therefore, MIRC encourages you to pass Representative O'Neil's LD 1170: Resolve, to Promote Passenger Rail for Commuters. Thank you for your consideration of this legislation.

Tobin Williamson
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MIRC Advocacy Manager

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