



Maine Education Association

Jesse Hargrove President | Beth French Vice President | Jaye Rich Treasurer
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Testimony

In Support Of

LD 2159, An Act to Require School Buses to Be Equipped with and to Use School Bus Crossing Arms

Jan Kosinski, Government Relations Director, Maine Education Association

Before the Transportation Committee

January 29, 2026

Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts, and distinguished members of the Transportation Committee,

My name is Jan Kosinski, and I serve as the Director of Government Relations for the Maine Education Association. The MEA represents nearly 24,000 educators across the state, including teachers and education support professionals in almost every public school district, faculty and staff in the University of Maine and Maine Community College systems, and thousands of retired educators. The MEA also proudly represents school bus drivers in many school districts throughout Maine.

I am here today to offer testimony on behalf of the MEA in support of LD 2159, *An Act to Require School Buses to Be Equipped with and to Use School Bus Crossing Arms*.

The MEA is deeply saddened that two students were tragically killed this school year in school bus accidents. Obviously school buses and school bus drivers provide a critical resource for students and communities. According to the Maine Department of Education, school buses transport nearly 130,000 students to/from school on any given day and travel over 30 million miles in an average school year.¹ While the work our school bus drivers do every school day is critical and impressive, none of us can be complacent or content when students are being harmed or even killed during their commute to/from school.

The MEA supports LD 2159 as a commonsense safety measure to protect more students and to hopefully avoid any more tragedies in the future.

We understand via a press release last week from the Governor's Office that Governor Mills intends to propose funding in her supplemental budget to retrofit "Maine school buses with crossing arms and anti-pinch door sensors."²

¹ Please see [Maine DOE Update – October 15, 2021 – Maine DOE Newsroom](#)

² Please see [Following Tragic Incidents, Governor Mills Announces Actions and Investments to Enhance School Bus Safety | Office of Governor Janet T. Mills](#)



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The same press release reported the Governor is proposing \$4.3 million in the supplemental budget and this funding “would cover retrofitting nearly 1,700 buses owned by Maine school districts which are not currently equipped with either or both safety measures and that can be retrofitted.” And this proposal comes after Governor Mills signed LD 19, *An Act to Require Newly Purchased Public School Buses to Be Equipped with School Bus Crossing Arms*, and as the title states, requires buses of the 2021 model or newer to be equipped with crossing arms. In 2023, the Governor signed LD 62, *An Act to Require Antipinch Sensors on School Bus Doors*, requiring anti-pinch door sensors in school buses of the 2025 model year or newer. It is important to note this bill was passed after two students, one in Auburn and one in Buxton, both got stuck in the school bus door and were dragged.

It is our hope this bill and/or the forthcoming budget proposal from the Governor will finally retrofit ALL buses in Maine with proven technologies such as crossing arms and anti-pinch sensors. Our only regret is that the state did not act sooner.

As a representative of school bus drivers in our state, we also must acknowledge the tremendous shortage of drivers in our state. School districts are clamoring for qualified bus drivers. In my own town, there is a sign as you enter town encouraging residents to apply while also advertising a starting wage of nearly \$30 per hour and assistance with the commercial driver’s license process. In a recent private conversation with a transportation director we learned the average age of drivers in his district was nearly 70 years old. Increased wages certainly help recruit bus drivers, but there are other challenges that hamper recruitment including unusual hours and part time work. School districts that find ways to offer year-round employment, consistent schedules, and better working conditions often have fewer challenges.

While we can and should fund the capital improvements we need to make school buses as safe as possible for students, we also should work together to address the significant workforce shortages we are seeing in our schools, especially with bus drivers. If we really want to ensure the highest safety standards for our students, we should support both the capital needs of school buses and the human needs of bus drivers.

Thank you for your time and your consideration and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.