

Testimony of Stevia Smith on LD 2159, *An Act to Require School Buses to Be Equipped with and to Use School Bus Crossing Arms*
Public Hearing January 29, 2026 @ 1:00 pm in State House, Room 126

Good afternoon, Senator Nangle and distinguished members of the Transportation Committee. My name is Stevia Smith, I am a resident of Saco, and am providing this testimony to request your support in passing LD 2159, *An Act to Require School Buses to Be Equipped with and to Use School Bus Crossing Arms*.

Safeguarding our children is of paramount importance. We must implement adequate school bus safety requirements based on reasonably available technology, and it is clear that current regulations fall short. The insufficiencies in the State's current rules have again come into focus with the recent tragic deaths of two young students in late 2025; Brayden Callahan, age 12, and Simon Gonzalez, age 5. These children lost their lives in accidents that might have been prevented had sufficient school bus safety features been required and used.

I understand that Brayden Callahan died after being run over by his school bus when walking in front of the bus on a crosswalk, and that the bus did not have a deployed crossing arm. Simon Gonzalez died after his arm was pinched in the bus doors and he was dragged 280 feet and then run over, with no anti-pinch technology in place.

I urge you to approve LD 2159, albeit with a few crucial revisions. LD 2159 as currently drafted would require that all school buses be equipped with and use crossing arms. LD 62, passed in July 2023, requires that buses manufactured in 2025 or later be equipped with anti-pinch sensors, but does not address pre-2025 buses and does not require use of the technology. Therefore, LD 2159 must be amended to require that all school buses, regardless of manufacture year, be equipped with crossing arms and anti-pinch technology and that such crossing arm and anti-pinch technology be used at all times.

I understand that the proposed funding recently announced by Governor Mills for retrofitting buses with crossing arms and anti-pinch sensors may be tied to funding for other projects, which will decrease its chance of approval. I urge that the school bus portion be split off separately such that it can be approved easily and expeditiously.

The reality is that accidents with children and school buses will continue to happen, but with LD 2159 we have a better chance of avoiding tragedy. The bill must be amended or the majority of school buses in Maine will be unaffected. The bill and its funding are critically needed and overdue.

Thank you,

Ms. Stevia Smith
Resident of Saco, Maine