

Committee: TRA

Drafter: MF

File Name: G:\COMMITTEES\TRA\Amendments\132nd 2nd\For Initial Review\297102.docx

LR (item) #: 2971(02)

New Title?: N

Add Emergency?: keeps emergency

Date: 3/20/2026

**Committee Amendment “ ” to LD 2159**

“An Act to Require School Buses to Be Equipped with and to Use School Bus Crossing Arms”

Amend the bill by striking out everything after the emergency preamble and before the summary and inserting the following:

**Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:**

**Sec. 1. 5 MRSA 12004-I, sub-§95 is enacted to read:**

**95.**

<u>Transportation:</u>	<u>Maine School</u>	<u>Not Authorized</u>	<u>29-A MRSA §2313</u>
<u>School</u>	<u>Transportation Safety</u>		
<u>Transportation</u>	<u>Commission</u>		

*this is unchanged from printed bill - just a new sec. #*  
**Sec. 2. 29-A MRSA §2302, sub-§1-A, as enacted by PL 2019, c. 413, §2, is amended to read:**

**1-A. School bus crossing arms.** A school bus of ~~model year 2021 or newer~~ must be equipped with a school bus crossing arm.

**Sec. 3. 29-A MRSA §2304, sub-§2 is amended to read:**

**2. Doors.** A school bus must be equipped with at least 2 doors as follows:

- A. One door on the right side near the front for ordinary exits and entrances, which must be equipped with technology to prevent the door from closing on a person's limb or other body part if the school bus was manufactured in 2025 or later; and
- B. A 2nd door located in the center of the rear or if the engine makes that impossible, on the left side in the center or to the rear of center. The 2nd door must be free of obstruction, clearly marked as an emergency exit, and constructed to open from inside and outside.

If the the door is open and passenger are onboard, the bus may not be in motion.

**Sec. 4. 29-A MRSA §2306-A is enacted to read:**

**§2306-A. Required use of school bus crossing arm**

1. Required use. The operator of a school bus equipped with a school bus crossing arm shall activate the school bus crossing arm while the school bus is stopped to receive or discharge passengers. The operator of school bus equipped with a school bus crossing arm shall ensure that a physical restriction that prevents the crossing arm from being used is not created unnecessarily.

2. Prohibition; disable school bus cross arm. The school bus operator may not disable the crossing arm unless there is a physical barrier that prevents the crossing arm from extending safely.

**Sec. 5. 29-A MRSA §2308, sub-§1 is amended to read:**

**1. Receiving or discharging passengers.** A school bus operator shall activate flashing lights at least 100 feet before a stop is made to receive or discharge passengers. These lights must be continually displayed until after the bus has received or discharged passengers. The red signal lights, stop arm and the crossing arm must be activated and in use while receiving or discharging passengers.

**Sec. 6. 29-A MRSA §2312 is enacted to read:**

**§2312. Penalty**

A violation of the rules adopted by the Commissioner of Education pursuant to section 2311 or the laws in this subchapter are traffic infractions unless otherwise specified within this subchapter.

**Sec. 7. 29-A MRSA §2313 is enacted to read:**

**§2313 Maine School Transportation Safety Commission**

The Maine School Transportation Safety Commission, referred to in this section as “the commission,” is established by Title 5, section 12004-I, subsection 95 and operates in accordance with this section.

**1. Members.** The commission consists of at least 9 members:

A. The Commissioner of Public Safety or the commissioner's designee;

B. The Commissioner of Education or the commissioner's designee;

C. The head of the Maine School Safety Center;

D. Two members from a statewide organization dedicated to pupil transportation who must be:

(1) The organization's board president; and

(2) The organization's board vice president;

E. The Commissioner of Transportation or the commissioner's designee;

F. A member designated by the Commissioner of Education who is currently serving as a transportation director for a school administrative unit; and

G. A representative of a statewide organization representing school administrative units; and

H. A representative from the Maine School Safety Center with expertise in pupil transportation.

**2. Commission invitees.** The commission may invite additional committee members to participate as a member of the commission, including but not limited to, the Secretary of State or the secretary's designee. An invitee may be designated as voting council members at the commission's discretion.

**3. Duties.** The commission shall:

A. Review current statutes and regulations related to safety standards, protocols, and school bus driver training and ensure clear communication of these requirements to all school administrative units;

B. Produce an updated set of best practices for school bus safety and disseminate it to all school administrative units;

C. Identify changes or improvements needed in school transportation rules to ensure the safety and well-being of all students, staff and drivers;

D. Identify school bus safety features that can be installed, upgraded, or replaced, including door anti-pinch sensors and school bus crossing arms;

E. Encourage and assist school administrative units in the effective communication of school bus safety information to students and families;

F. Confirm that school administrative units have a process to complete, on a semi-annual basis, school bus safety training checklists;

G. Identify training needs for bus drivers and a mechanism for this training to be provided to all school transportation units; and

H. Any other information the commission determines is necessary for school transportation safety.

**4. Meetings.** The commission shall meet at least once a year.

**5. Chair.** The members of the commission shall elect from among the membership a chair. The chair continues to hold the office until a successor is elected.

**6. Report.** By February 1, 2027, and annually thereafter, the commission shall submit a report of its activities, any other facts and compliance issues regarding school bus safety and any recommended statutory changes to the joint standing committees of the Legislature having jurisdiction over education and cultural affairs matters and transportation. If the report includes

recommended statutory changes, joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over transportation may report out a bill related to the recommendation.

**Sec. 8. Maine School Safety Center program, Other Special Revenue Funds account established.** The State Controller shall establish within the Department of Education the nonlapsing Maine School Safety Center program, Other Special Revenue Funds account, which is funded through a transfer from the available balance of the Budget Stabilization Fund pursuant to section 9.

same as  
LD 2212,  
§ 5-9

**Sec. 9. Maine School Safety Center program, Other Special Revenue Funds account; limitations.** The Maine School Safety Center program, Other Special Revenue Funds account established pursuant to section 8 may only be used for one-time funding to a school administrative unit that retrofits its school buses with school bus crossing arms in compliance to Title 29-A, section 2302, subsection 1-A. A school administrative unit that retrofits its school buses with school bus crossing arms after on or after March 1, 2026, and has not received funds from this State for this purpose, may request reimbursement for one-time funding to cover the expenses of retrofitting the school bus.

**Sec. 10. Transfer from Budget Stabilization Fund; Maine School Safety Center program.** Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, on or before June 30, 2026, the State Controller shall transfer \$5,921,640 from the Budget Stabilization Fund within the Department of Administrative and Financial Services to the Department of Education, Maine School Safety Center program, Other Special Revenue Funds account.

same as  
LD 2212,  
§ 5-10

**Sec. 11. Appropriations and allocations.** The following appropriations and allocations are made.

#### EDUCATION, DEPARTMENT OF

##### Maine School Safety Center Z293

**Initiative:** Provides one-time funding for safety measures including retrofitting Maine school buses with crossing arms and anti-pinch door sensors. This funding will cover nearly 1,700 buses owned 44 by Maine school districts that are not currently equipped with either or both safety measures and that can be retrofitted.

[same as LD 2212, section T-11.] (attached)

**Effective date.** The section of this Act that amends Title 29-A, section 2302, subsection 1-A is effective February 15, 2027.

**Emergency clause.** In view of the emergency cited in the preamble, this legislation takes effect when approved.'

## SUMMARY

The amendment amends the bill in the following ways.

1. It clarifies that a school bus is prohibited from being in motion when a school bus door is open.
2. It removes the Class E penalty for a school bus operator who fails to use the crossing arm, and instead, states that a violation of the rules adopted by the Commissioner of Education pursuant to section 2311 or a violation any laws related to school bus operation are traffic infractions unless otherwise prescribed by law.
3. Requires the operator of a school bus equipped with a school bus crossing arm to ensure that a physical restriction that prevents the crossing arm from being used is not created unnecessarily.
4. It prohibits a school bus operator from disabling the crossing arm, except when there is a physical barrier that prevents the crossing arm from extending safely.
5. It establishes the Maine School Transportation Safety Commission, which is required to report annually, by February 1, to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over education and cultural affairs and the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over transportation. If the report includes recommended statutory changes, joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over transportation may report out a bill related to the recommendation.
6. It delays the effective date for all school buses to be equipped with crossing arms to February 15, 2027. All other provisions of the bill are effective upon approval.
7. It authorizes the State Controller to transfer funding from the Budget Stabilization Fund to implement a program to provide one-time funding to Maine school districts for school bus safety measures including retrofitting buses with crossing arms and anti-pinch door sensors. It also allows any school administrative unit that retrofits a school bus on or after March 1, 2026 with a school bus crossing arm to be reimbursed by the State for the cost of the retrofitting.

**MAINE SCHOOL SAFETY CENTER ZZ93**

**Initiative:** Provides one-time funding for safety measures including retrofitting Maine school buses with crossing arms and anti-pinch door sensors. This funding will cover nearly 1,700 buses owned by Maine school districts that are not currently equipped with either or both safety measures and that can be retrofitted.

**2025-26**

**2026-27**

**OTHER SPECIAL REVENUE FUNDS**  
All Other

	5,921,640	500
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,921,640</b>	<b>500</b>

**Summary - OTHER SPECIAL REVENUE FUNDS**

All Other

	5,921,640	500
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,921,640</b>	<b>500</b>

**Total Agency/Department**

All Funds

**OTHER SPECIAL REVENUE FUNDS**

	5,921,640	500
	5,921,640	500