

## **The Maine Heritage Policy Center Testimony to Oppose LD 1894 “An Act To Incentivize the Purchase of Electric Public School Buses”**

Senator Millett, Representative Kornfield and distinguished members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Adam Crepeau. I serve as a policy analyst at The Maine Heritage Policy Center. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to LD 1894.

According to Article IV, Part Third, Section 1 of the Maine State Constitution, the Second Session of the legislature shall be limited to budgetary matters, legislation called by the governor, legislation of an emergency nature submitted by the legislature, legislation referred to committees for study and report in the First Session and direct initiatives. The Constitution defines emergency bills as those that are “immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health or safety.”<sup>1</sup> While LD 1894 might be well-intentioned, it undoubtedly does not meet the threshold for an emergency and should be rejected.

Aside from this bill not being a real emergency, there are other reasons why the committee should consider voting “Ought Not to Pass” on LD 1894. For one, transportation and buses already cost \$754 per pupil and consume about 5.5 percent of school budget expenditures statewide. The total transportation and bus expense across the state is more than \$134.56 million.<sup>2</sup>

Transitioning to electric public school buses would undoubtedly increase this cost initially, putting further strain on school budgets. According to a 2018 study from the U.S. PIRG Education Fund, the upfront cost of an electric school bus is about \$230,000 — more than double the cost of a traditional diesel-powered school bus.<sup>3</sup> While the PIRG study touts a lifetime net savings of \$20,882 per electric bus when compared to diesel-powered buses (primarily due to lower maintenance and fuel costs), it still concedes that “it is not impossible that there will [be] some situations where an electric bus still costs more than a diesel bus.” According to a 2016 Clinton Global Initiative analysis, it takes about 13 years for the lower fuel and maintenance costs to break even with the initial cost savings of purchasing a diesel school bus.<sup>4</sup>

The Department of Education maintains that a type C school bus (the same used in the Clinton analysis) must have a minimum of 10 years on the road and an accumulated 125,000 miles in order for it to be replaced due to age or in exchange for additions to the fleet.<sup>5</sup> If this remains the standard, electric buses

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.maine.gov/legis/const/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.maine.gov/doe/funding/reports/expenditures>

<sup>3</sup> <https://uspirg.org/sites/pirg/files/reports/National%20-%20Paying%20for%20Electric%20Buses.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://green-technology.org/gcsummit16/images/35-ZEV-School-Buses.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://neo.maine.gov/doe/neo/transportation/Documentation/SchoolBusPurchaseProgram.pdf>

could be retired before realizing any savings from the tradeoff, which would add to the costs for school districts.

In addition, the committee should consider the range of electric school buses. An electric school bus can be driven for around 100 to 135 miles before it needs to be charged.<sup>6</sup> In contrast, diesel-powered buses can be driven for more than 400 miles before the driver needs to fill up the tank.<sup>7</sup> Further, diesel-powered buses can be refueled almost immediately whereas electric school buses need time to recharge. The logistics of this would make it more difficult for school districts to travel long distances for sporting events or offer long-range field trips and out-of-classroom experiences for their students.

Instead of approving LD 1894 now, lawmakers should wait to see the practical costs and benefits from similar programs in other states and cities. If these programs prove to be cost effective and save taxpayers money, it may be worth further exploration. However, projections rarely tell the whole story, and the last thing we need is for more education dollars to be used for purposes other than instruction.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://thomasbuiltbuses.com/bus-advisor/articles/common-drawbacks-of-electric-school-buses/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://thomasbuiltbuses.com/bus-advisor/articles/determining-fuel-costs/>