

Janet T. Mills
Governor

Jeanne M. Lambrew, Ph.D.
Commissioner



Maine Department of Health and Human Services
Office of MaineCare Services
11 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333-0011
Tel; (207) 287-2674; Fax (207) 287-2675
TTY: Dial 711 (Maine Relay)

April 12, 2023

Senator Joseph Baldacci, Chair
Representative Michele Meyer, Chair
Members, Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0100

Re: LD 825 – *An Act Relating to Transportation Services for MaineCare Members with Multiple Disabilities*

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services:

This letter is to provide information on LD 825, *An Act Relating to Transportation Services for MaineCare Members with Multiple Disabilities*. This bill requires that transportation services provided to members of the MaineCare program who have multiple disabilities ensure that a vehicle transporting the MaineCare member is equipped in a manner that accommodates the member's disabilities safely, ensure that the driver is physically capable of assisting the member in the event of an emergency and, to the extent possible, provide consistency in drivers.

Regarding Section 1A of the bill: Vehicles assigned to transport MaineCare members with multiple disabilities are already required to be equipped in a manner that accommodates the member's disabilities safely. The Department requires that NET brokers arrange transport for members receiving Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) and that drivers are trained in first aid, CPR, and receive sensitivity training in transporting persons with disabilities. Brokers and transporters are required to provide ADA compliant wheelchair accessible vehicles and to properly secure wheelchairs and members during transport.

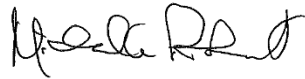
HCBS providers and members with disabilities serve on NET Broker Advisory Councils and attend meetings to provide important feedback on transportation. NET brokers contract with some HCBS providers to transport their members to and from services. This enables members to receive professional care during transport should it be necessary. The Department also requires that NET brokers allow for a personal assistant, at no cost to the personal assistant, to accompany members with disabilities to help members transport safely.

The requirements of Section 1B and 1C of this bill are not operationally feasible and will create a significant increase in missed rides. Brokers and transportation companies contracted to provide transportation services to MaineCare members are experiencing significant difficulties recruiting staff to fill existing vacancies. Regarding Section 1B of the bill: This requirement is not feasible. Transportation providers struggle to find and retain drivers as it is. The ability to match drivers' physical abilities with the weights and physical needs of members assumes a driver pool and capacity that unfortunately does not exist.

Regarding Section 1C of the bill: The same issue of limited drivers pertains here. There are not enough drivers to accommodate everyone getting their own driver or the same driver. Trips are scheduled in advance through multiple transporters on a first come, first served basis. Driver assignments are dependent on transporter and driver availability. Requiring that specific drivers serve specific members will dramatically increase missed trips.

Despite our commitment to member-focused transportation services, given these concerns, we oppose the bill. We wanted you to be aware of the above information as you consider this bill going forward. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michelle Probert", written in a cursive style.

Michelle Probert
Director
MaineCare Services