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February 1, 2024

Testimony in support of LD 2128 An Act Regarding Nonemergency Transportation for MaineCare Members

Greetings Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services. I am Bridget Quinn, Associate State Director of Advocacy and Outreach for AARP Maine.

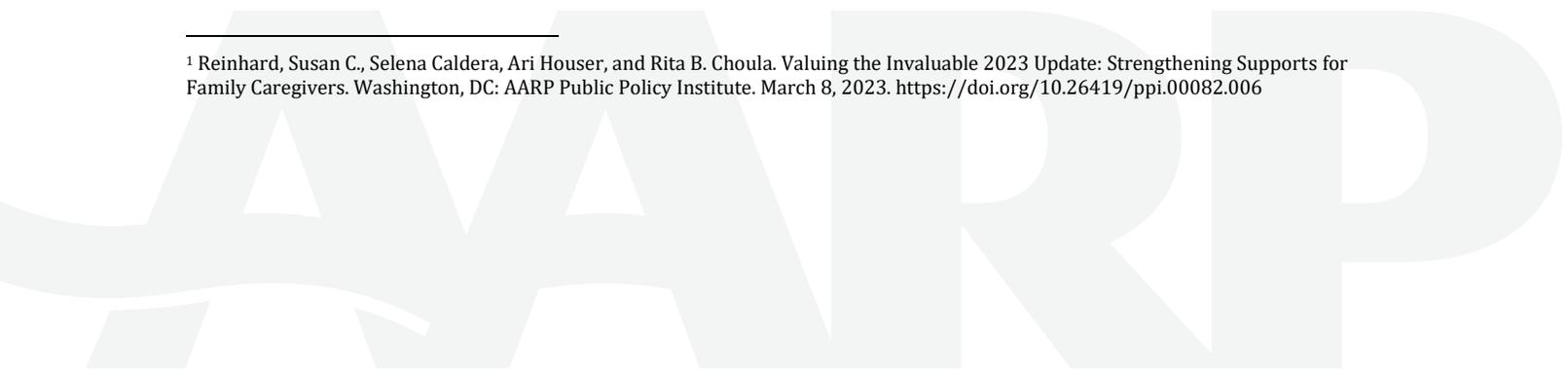
AARP is the nation's largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering Americans 50 and older to choose how they live as they age. On behalf of our nearly 200,000 members statewide, thank you for the opportunity to share testimony. Today, I am testifying in support of LD 2128 An Act Regarding Nonemergency Transportation for MaineCare Members.

This bill will direct DHHS to allow MaineCare beneficiaries to have one adult accompany them while traveling utilizing a MaineCare- contracted nonemergency transportation service. AARP ME supports LD 2128 because it is critical to better protecting family caregivers, especially those in our rural communities, support their care partners.

In Maine, 166,000 family caregivers support loved ones. This equates to nearly 155 million hours of unpaid family care. If that were valued at \$18.81 per hour that means these caregivers provide Maine nearly \$2.9 billion in estimated economic value.¹ Family caregivers may be a spouse, child or parent. No matter what the relationship they often provide critical and invaluable support to their care partner. LD 2128 makes changes to MaineCare that will recognize that critical support by allowing care partners to accompany one another while utilizing Nonemergency Transportation.

Transportation can be a huge barrier to getting to medical appointments in most of Maine, but it is particularly challenging and prohibitive in rural parts. Without LD 2128, individuals could be at risk of not having the needed support with them while accessing medical care. This bill reflects the needs of care partners and recognizes their role and value. Being able to have support when needed can have a huge impact on Maine's family care partners.

¹ Reinhard, Susan C., Selena Caldera, Ari Houser, and Rita B. Choula. Valuing the Invaluable 2023 Update: Strengthening Supports for Family Caregivers. Washington, DC: AARP Public Policy Institute. March 8, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.26419/ppi.00082.006>



We urge this committee to support LD 2128 to create a system that better reflects the needs and wants of Maine's family care partners.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. If you have question for me I can be reached at bquinn@arp.org.

Bridget Quinn
AARP Maine

