

LD841 Resolve, to Study the Delivery of Emergency Medical Services to and Ferry Service Effects on Island Communities in the State

Testimony in Support

April 2, 2025

Senator Beebe- Center, Representative Hasenfus, and members of the Criminal Justice & Public Safety Committee, my name is Kimberly Grindle and I am a resident of Islesboro. I am submitting this letter today to express my support for LD 841, "Resolve, To Study the Delivery of Emergency Medical Services to and Ferry Service Effects on Island Communities in the State."

I am a 7th generation island resident. My children, other immediate family members, and I have all used the ferry during medical emergencies. However, we have also been forced to rely on a lobster boat, our island's water taxi, and even LifeFlight of Maine when the ferry was unable—or unwilling—to transport us. Unfortunately, the trend seems to be that the ferry system does not want to support island residents, visitors, or workers during "off-hour" medical emergencies by choosing not to transport a person while in the midst of a medical emergency. While they do sometimes make trips, there is no consistency, and the reality is that having the boat berthed on the mainland overnight could have disastrous effects.

Essential, reliable ferry transportation and timely emergency services are vital to the health and safety of our communities. These systems are lifelines—not just for routine travel, but for critical care, including trauma response, chronic illness management, and childbirth. Most rural EMT crews are volunteer-based and asking these volunteers to risk dangerous waters in small vessels—especially during increasingly stormy winters—is not safe. It is less ideal for the patient being transported. LifeFlight is an option, but too often, their aircraft is unavailable due to other calls, or weather conditions prevent them from flying. Even when transport is possible, patients that are not covered by health insurance are then faced with a nearly \$20,000 bill.

This bill is a necessary step toward forward in gaining valuable insight into the strengths and weaknesses of our current system. More importantly, this study can help guide future policy decisions to ensure that island residents have timely, reliable access to the medical services they need. I strongly urge you to support LD 841.

Thank you for your time and consideration.