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4/3/2025

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

Re: LD 263 - *Resolve, to Provide Rural Nonmedical Transportation Services to the Elderly and Adults with Disabilities Receiving Home and Community Benefits Under MaineCare*

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, this letter is written to provide the Committee with information neither for nor against LD 263, *Resolve, to Provide Rural Nonmedical Transportation Services to the Elderly and Adults with Disabilities Receiving Home and Community Benefits under MaineCare*.

This resolve requires the Department of Health and Human Services (the "Department") to develop a pilot project lasting 18 months that provides up to \$2,000 in non-medical transportation services to each member who receive services pursuant to Chapter 101: MaineCare Benefits Manual, Chapter II, Section 19, Home and Community Benefits for Older and Disabled Adults. This resolve also requires the Department to submit a report regarding the costs, effectiveness and future viability of the pilot no later than December 3, 2025.

The Department recently completed a research project on how other states provide similar transportation services. The Department strongly recommends that any legislatively directed transportation initiative that focuses on this population consider the findings from this project before defining a specific type of pilot project.

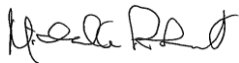
The Department does have a concern that any expansion of transportation services or benefits without sufficient investment in the underlying transportation infrastructure could negatively impact the existing transportation network in Maine. There are a limited number of transportation companies and non-profit organizations in Maine that already provide transportation across multiple public and private transportation systems, including but not limited to MaineCare's Non-Emergency Transportation program. The labor shortage has exacerbated the challenge in expanding the current network to meet demand from existing transportation programs. Expanding services without expanding the infrastructure will result in programs competing even further for the same transportation resources. The resolve does not address who will provide the transportation or where the resources will come from to build additional capacity to provide new transportation services. This could significantly undermine the success of any pilot program.

The resolve also does not indicate whether the Committee intends for the Department to draw down matching federal funds to fund this pilot. Approval to receive federal matching funds would require rulemaking for Section 19 of the MaineCare Benefits Manual, an amendment to the home and community-based services 1915(c) waiver for Section 19 services that requires approval from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), and changes to the service authorization process.

In addition, CMS generally does not approve pilot projects outside of an 1115 waiver, which requires the state to demonstrate cost neutrality or cost savings. The application process for an 1115 waiver is extensive and often requires external support, as well as ongoing, required external evaluation support and ongoing program management and reporting staffing.

Thank you for your time and attention. Through this letter, we want the Committee to be aware of the above information as it considers this bill moving forward. If you have further questions, please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michelle Probert".

Michelle Probert, Director
Office of MaineCare Services

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Saucier".

Paul Saucier, Director
Office of Aging and Disability Services