



Testimony in Support

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

April 3rd, 2025

Good afternoon, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and members of the committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Nicole Marchesi. I am the Public Policy Advocate for the Maine Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program.

The Ombudsman Program provides statewide advocacy for residents of nursing homes, assisted housing including residential care and assisted living and for recipients of home care and adult day services. Additionally, the program serves patients waiting for discharge from the hospital who encounter barriers in accessing the long-term services and supports they need.

LD 263 requires the Department of Health and Human Services to develop a pilot project that provides up to \$2,000 in non-medical transportation services to individuals receiving services under Section 19, Home and Community Benefits for the Elderly and Adults with Disabilities (HCB). The pilot would conclude with the department submitting a report regarding the costs, effectiveness and future viability of the project to the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services.

Those who are on the Section 19 HCB waiver are medically eligible for nursing home level of care but choose to stay at home. Unlike other transportation programs, this pilot would specifically target those at the highest risk for hospitalization or institutionalization. Often, these consumers rely on their PSS staff for non-medical transport such as trips to the grocery store, food banks or pharmacy. With the current staffing shortages, many consumers on Section 19 HCB are understaffed or not staffed at all. This leaves some rural consumers with no way to leave their home and increases the likelihood of food insecurity.

Maine is facing an ongoing trend of nursing home closures, making it incredibly difficult to find a nursing home bed for those who qualify. Keeping consumers on Section 19 HCB independent in the community as long as possible should be of utmost importance to the department. The department should be looking at all areas of socioeconomic inequalities to determine what

resources, such as access to transportation, make the greatest impact in keeping waiver consumers independent at home.

LTCOP supports this legislation as it would not only help older adults and adults with disabilities access the resources they need in their own community, but it would provide data on how transportation impacts independence.

Thank you for your time and consideration.