



LD 1451: An Act to Strengthen Coordination of Community Transportation

Presented to the Transportation Committee, April 23, 2025

By Kelly Sirimoglu, Executive Director, Piscataquis Regional Food Center

Good Day. Thank you for the opportunity to present our testimony on behalf of the people we serve in the Maine Highlands.

My name is Kelly Sirimoglu and I work with Piscataquis Regional Food Center serving the people of Piscataquis County and surrounding rural communities. I'm here today to speak on behalf of the many rural Mainers whose daily lives are profoundly shaped by the lack of reliable, affordable, and accessible transportation options in rural areas.

Transportation insecurity and food insecurity are in lockstep in Piscataquis County. We live in a large county. We have no mass transportation, and on average, 7 in 10 households live at or below the poverty line. For low income households, small automotive repairs may be skipped in order to pay for food, heat or rent. Many of the hundreds of households we serve carpool to the Food Center. Often three or four families make the trip together from Brownville, or Greenville, into Dover-Foxcroft. When the car breaks down, or the drive is ill, all of those families are impacted.

We serve an older adult from Brownville, who lives two miles from the main road. He arranges Lynx transport to visit the food pantry. He walks from his home to the main road to greet his driver and travel 45 minutes to the Food Center. When he is done shopping he waits half an hour or more for the return trip.

In our region, transportation isn't just a matter of convenience—it's a lifeline. It's the difference between someone getting to a medical appointment or missing it. It's the difference between a parent accessing fresh groceries and being forced to settle for what's at the nearest convenience store.

We urge the State of Maine to invest in rural transportation infrastructure and to engage directly with the communities affected to shape solutions that truly work. Reliable transportation isn't a luxury. It's a foundation for equity, health, and economic opportunity.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to addressing this critical issue.

Kelly Sirimoglu
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