

## **Testimony of Regina Bowie, Resident of Presque Isle**

*Supporting:* LD 1451 An Act to Advance Coordination of Community Transportation - Sponsored by Senator Mike Tipping

April 10, 2025

Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts, and Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation:

My name is Regina Bowie. I am a resident of Presque Isle. I am a member of Speaking Up For Us and a current board member of the Maine Developmental Disabilities Council. I support LD 1451 and appreciate Senator Tipping and the other cosponsors for bringing this legislation forward.

I'm a person with a few disabilities, and I experience a lot of transportation barriers. Walking has been really hard for me lately, and I try to take local public transportation when I can. Sometimes I am able to drive myself to local appointments and also to run errands.

I have to use Modivcare transportation to go out of town for appointments, or for appointments like daytime procedures, where I need a ride home. I have to go to Bangor for some appointments, sometimes it takes me two to two and a half hours to travel, and it costs too much on a fixed income. When I need to go to the dentist, I'm not able to use Modivcare transportation, and I have to pay for the ride there and back. It is very hard to become a patient at a MaineCare-supported dentist because of the extremely long waiting lists.

Frequently, Modivcare's automated system to schedule rides is too complicated to use. The automated assistant is a nightmare to work with, especially when I need to speak with a real person to make myself understood. The repetitiveness of the automation system and not getting through to a human being to speak with is so draining. You try it, and you will see what I mean. If you had to do this even once for a family member who needs it, you would create change in this system.

Other times Modivcare transportation makes mistakes, or they have staff shortages, and I'm late to appointments. Once they cancelled on me altogether and I had to cancel my appointment. There were health repercussions because of that one missed appointment.

I don't always like going to the doctor, but I don't have a choice. People don't understand that when you have disabilities, you need to go to more and different kinds

of therapies and medical appointments, which help you live with the disabilities you have and live a better life. They help you be able to do the important activities of life and live your life in a better way, with fewer side effects and events leading to not being able to do the activities I want to do. For example, I recently testified in person on some other bills, and I'm still recovering from all that it required of me to physically do that. And when I'm mentally exhausted, it's hard for me to get anywhere.

I hear about other people who have transportation barriers, too. And one time I saw it for myself. I was using Modivcare transportation and was on the mini-bus, and we were waiting for someone to come out and get the bus. The driver just left, even though the person still had a minute to make the bus - which didn't make sense because they were just going up the street to drop me off at my appointment.

This bill will help by:

- Bringing Mobility Managers to our different regions. A mobility manager can help with checks and balances, making sure transportation providers are doing what they are supposed to. (And not doing what they want to do, which can lead to transportation nightmares for all of us.)
- Mobility Managers are also there to help with transportation resources for everyone. They can also provide specialized training for drivers, too. These are really important for drivers to work appropriately with children, older adults, and people with disabilities.
- Making sure agencies work together and are held accountable, to make transportation more efficient and effective. And that staff are trained well to work well with people of all ages and abilities while they are scheduling their rides and being transported.
- Also, making sure management works on system flaws, so each person with different kinds of abilities are able to access rides. And that the systems are updated and upgraded, and that they are easy and simplified to work with.

Thank you for listening to my perspective. Please vote Ought to Pass.

Sincerely,

Regina Bowie