

Testimony in Support of LD1359
submitted by
Katherine Freund, founder and CEO
ITNAmerica

Senator Timothy Nangle and Representative Lydia Crafts, thank you for this opportunity to present testimony in support of LD1359. My name is Katherine Freund and I am the founder of *ITNPortland* and founder and CEO of *ITNAmerica*, a national nonprofit based in Westbrook, Maine. Proudly founded in Maine, *ITNAmerica* promotes lifelong mobility for older adults and people with mobility challenges. We support sustainable, community-based transportation by leading a national transportation network grounded in research, policy analysis, technology and education.

Since 1995, *ITNPortland* has provided 24/7 service in private automobiles with both volunteer and paid drivers and delivered more than 350,000 door-through-door and arm-through-arm rides for older adults and people with mobility challenges. *ITNAmerica's* national network now includes 100 nonprofit volunteer transportation services across the nation, from Maine to Hawaii and Wyoming to Florida. *ITNAmerica* has supported more than 1.6M rides.

I studied sustainable transportation for the aging population while earning my Master's degree in public policy from the Muskie Institute for Public Service. I chaired the 1993 Maine Legislative Task Force to Study the Safe Mobility for Maine's Aging Population, served on the 2005 White House Conference on Aging, testified before the United States Senate Special Committee on Aging, and became an Ashoka Fellow for this work in 2012. Recently, I served on the transportation working group for the Maine Climate Council and I am a member of the Public Transit Advisory Council where I chair the Transportation Alternatives Committee.

Sunday mornings, I volunteer to drive a 98-year-old woman to church; she has been a member of *ITNPortland* for 26 years. Thursday mornings at 6:30am, it is my privilege to drive a 77-year-old man to the synagogue. I found him one morning walking by the side of the road because he has dementia and can no longer drive. He was once the valedictorian of his high school.

What I like most about LD1359 is the call for transparency in the allocation and distribution of funding and the call for collaboration and coordination with the

Department of Health and Human Services. Transparency and collaboration go hand-in-hand, not only for funding purposes, but for the feelings of trust and climate of cooperation they foster. If many hands make light work, many heads make brighter ideas. Where people truly work together, innovation follows.

Maine is a national leader in community-based volunteer transportation. Through Dr. Patricia Oh's work at the University of Maine's Center on Aging, a Maine network of Age Friendly Communities has blossomed, many providing volunteer transportation. In 1995, the [Maine Legislature passed the most progressive law in the country](#) to protect volunteer drivers, a policy that has now served as a model for at least seven other states and for AARP. In 2005, the Maine Legislature passed a law that allows older people to trade the cars they can no longer drive to pay for the rides they need. In 2022, Senator Collins supported Congressionally Directed Spending to plan America's Volunteer Driver Center (AVDC), a program at ITNAmerica, and in 2024, Senator King joined Senator Collins to pass additional CDS grant funds for this effort to plan a national public information campaign to recruit 150,000 volunteer drivers by changing the way Americans think about and support transportation for our aging population. ITNAmerica, a Maine nonprofit organization, will be to volunteer driving what the Red Cross is to blood donation. It will serve Maine and the nation.

Please vote to support LD1359. It is a vote for transparency, collaboration and the trust and innovation it inspires and fosters. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.