

Testimony of Jessica Cyr, resident of Kittery, Maine

Supporting: LD 1835 An Act to Improve Nonemergency MaineCare Transportation - Sponsored by Senator Richard Bennett

May 6, 2025

Good afternoon, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Joint Committee on Health and Human Services:

My name is Jessica Cyr, and I am a resident of Kittery, Maine. I support LD 1835 and appreciate Senator Bennett and the other cosponsors for bringing this legislation forward.

I am here to speak as a disability advocate and quadriplegic, wheelchair user, but I am also a busy parent and active member of my community. My injury in 2017 catapulted me into a new way of life and being constantly reliant on the help of others for basic, daily tasks. I quickly learned even before being discharged post injury, that non-emergency transportation as a new wheelchair user was going to be a challenge.

My experience with the Mainecare transportation system has been problematic. I have experienced problems with the telephone system, either not being responsive because I don't type or answer fast enough due to my fine motor issues as well as problems not interpreting my speech accurately. This, plus unreliable ride fulfillment and the long waiting time for a driver to return, makes the system unusable for me. Sometimes a 40 minute total trip and appointment turns into 5 hours. This is more complicated for me since I have additional healthcare needs like timed medication and particular bathroom requirements that I need to be home for. I stopped using Mainecare's transportation because it is more efficient for me to find another way to travel to doctor appointments such as paying for a caregiver to drive me. Unfortunately, I believe that our current Mainecare transportation system deters Mainers from obtaining the recommended medical care by not making scheduling super simple, responsive and intuitive and the rides consistent and quick.

I haven't had success when voicing concerns to management at my transportation provider. I don't feel that they truly understand or want to help. I think having another avenue to voice concerns, like the proposed independent ombudsman, would help this system and the healthcare for Mainers. I know many other disabled Mainers have had similar, frustrating experiences.

Thank you for listening. Please vote Ought to Pass.

Thanks again,
Jessica Cyr

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Kittery
LD 1835

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Sometimes a 40 minute total trip and appointment turns into 5 hours. This is more complicated for me since I have additional healthcare needs like timed medication and particular bathroom requirements that I need to be home for. I stopped using Mainecare's transportation because it is more efficient for me to find another way to travel to doctor appointments such as paying for a caregiver to drive me.

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