



# **MAINE AFL-CIO**

***A Union of Unions Standing for Maine Workers***  
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## **Testimony of Adam Goode, Maine AFL-CIO Legislative & Political Director, In Support of LD 1835, “An Act to Improve Nonemergency MaineCare Transportation”**

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Adam Goode. I’m the Legislative and Political Director of the Maine AFL-CIO. We represent 40,000 working people in the state of Maine. We work to improve the lives and working conditions of our members and all working people. We testify in support of LD 1835.

Our support for this bill comes from three avenues. First, we represent workers who work in the transportation sector, including members of the Amalgamated Transportation Union, Local 714 and drivers at KVCAP who are organized with the International Association of Machinists, S-89. Those workers do difficult work, providing necessary services under increasingly dangerous circumstances. Second, unions in Maine have been developing a vision to address accelerating climate change and deepening inequality by passing legislation to support thousands of new union jobs in the clean energy sector. We know that public transportation is one tool to address climate change. Third, working class people count on public transportation to get to and from work, to buy groceries and engage in their community. Due to short staffing, likely connected to working conditions and funding shortages, the public bus in the Bangor area has cut their Saturday service, leaving no bus available at all on the weekends.

This bill will make MaineCare’s non-emergency transportation system more efficient and effective. Maine’s health care system depends on safe and reliable transportation. For patients, most medical appointments require non-emergency transportation. Missed appointments can mean delayed care, worsening health conditions, and even increased emergency room visits and hospitalizations. For medical providers, last minute cancellations can mean lost revenue and missed opportunities to care for others. Minimizing transportation barriers takes pressure off of Maine’s increasingly stressed health care system.

Most importantly, there are good financial reasons for having good access to non-emergency transportation. For every \$1 spent on non-emergency transportation to Medicaid covered services, \$11 in health care costs are avoided. MaineCare NET is intended to prevent missed appointments and ensure every MaineCare member gets the care they need, when they need it. Too many MaineCare members report challenges using MaineCare NET, coupled with a sense that their concerns are not being addressed. If there are challenges for the riders, then there are challenges for the workers who are driving the vehicles, which is why we are here in support of this bill.

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.cbsnews.com/chicago/news/union-violence-cta-buses-driver-shortage/>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.ktnv.com/news/renewed-attention-for-transit-police-after-another-incident-on-board-rtc-bus>

<sup>3</sup><https://www.richmondsentinel.ca/article-detail/33624/transit-association-says-more-police-security-needed-on-city-buses-trains>

<sup>4</sup><https://calgaryherald.com/news/local-news/code-blue-transit-union-says-its-reviewing-up-to-10-staff-assault-cases-each-month>

We close by reminding you that in recent years there has been a nationwide increase in violent attacks towards transit workers themselves and on transit in general.<sup>1,2</sup> Both transit users and workers have to worry about being verbally, physically or even sexually assaulted when they are doing their job. In addition to concerns about violence in Maine workplaces, there have been consistent national news stories about violent situations on public transit, including stabbings<sup>3</sup>, operators being punched, spit on, robbed and verbal assaults.

Unions are all about safety for riders and workers, and dangerous workplaces result in lost time, staffing challenges and negative impacts on employee recruitment and retention. Transit systems also lose revenue when a bus has to divert or pause a regular route to deal with an incident.<sup>4</sup>

We share this information to remind you of the challenges both workers and riders face and to recognize that there are unmet needs that would benefit from the ideas in LD 1835.