



Testimony in Support of LD 1835 – An Act to Improve Non Emergency Mainecare Transportation

Provided by: Sherry Wood
May 6, 2025

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

My name is Sherry Wood, and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of SKILLS, Inc., a nonprofit organization serving individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and/or Autism in central Maine. We write in strong support of LD 1835, because transportation is fundamental to community inclusion, personal growth, and independence, values at the heart of our mission.

SKILLS provides a wide range of individualized supports, including Community Support programs, Community Integration services, Residential Supports, and employment readiness opportunities. With locations in Pittsfield, Skowhegan, and Hinckley, we help individuals connect with their communities, pursue meaningful goals, and live independently in the places they call home. Our services include career planning, a Job Club, and the launch of pre-employment and driver's education pilot programs, which reflect our commitment to supporting every person's right to choose how they live, learn, and work.

For the people we serve, transportation is not optional, it is a lifeline. It determines whether someone can attend a job interview, get to a medical appointment, or participate in a class or community event. Yet in many of the communities we serve, public transportation is either limited or unavailable. Most of our program participants do not drive, and while our Direct Support Professionals provide some transportation, the needs can outpace capacity. When those rides don't happen, or happen unreliably, it causes real disruption.

LD 1835 provides tools that would help prevent and respond to situations like these as well as medical appointments. A public performance dashboard would make it easier to track problems such as delays and missed pickups, while a statewide ombudsman would give riders a clear point of contact when things go wrong. These structures offer a way to identify gaps, elevate concerns and support better results for the people we serve.

However, there is currently no clear public reporting on how the NET system is functioning, how complaints are handled or whether rides are being completed on time. When transportation is as essential as a prescription or a diagnosis, the lack of accountability has serious impact and consequences. LD 1835 provides the accountability infrastructure we need to do that well.

On behalf of SKILLS, Inc. and the individuals and families we serve across central Maine, I respectfully encourage your support for LD 1835.

Sincerely,
Sherry Wood, Community Supports Assistant Manager
SKILLS, Inc.