



May 9, 2025

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and esteemed members of the Health and Human Services Committee. My name is Joe Everett, and I serve as President & CEO of The Opportunity Alliance (TOA), a nonprofit organization that supports 25,000 Maine residents each year through a wide range of services, including behavioral health & wellness, childcare & early childhood education, community well-being, and economic mobility. I am writing to express my support for LD 1835, *An Act to Improve Non-Emergency MaineCare Transportation*, which is vital to ensuring that MaineCare recipients can reliably access the care and services they need.

Transportation is a critical social determinant of health. Every day, the individuals and families we serve depend on safe, timely rides to reach medical care, behavioral health treatment, and other essential services. For many MaineCare members, non-emergency transportation (NET) is their only connection to these appointments, including preventive care and ongoing treatment. When transportation breaks down, the consequences are serious: missed appointments, worsened health conditions, and preventable emergency room visits. We see firsthand how these gaps strain not only our clients but also the broader health care system.

MaineCare NET is Maine's largest investment in public transportation, providing over 1 million rides each year and leveraging significant federal funding. While the system serves a vital role, feedback from both clients and staff highlights opportunities to strengthen consistency and responsiveness across regions.

LD 1835 offers timely, practical solutions to strengthen MaineCare's Non-Emergency Transportation (NET) system and ensure it better serves Maine residents. The bill advances transparency and accountability by requiring the Office of MaineCare Services to maintain a public-facing dashboard with key performance indicators, providing visibility into system performance across regions and services. It establishes an independent ombudsman program to give clients an avenue for raising concerns and resolving grievances fairly.

LD 1835 also reinforces the importance of local insight by supporting advisory committees that include a broader range of voices, those providing services and those directly affected by them. This kind of engagement helps shape solutions that reflect the day-to-day realities of accessing care in Maine. Finally, with a modest investment, the bill enhances system efficiency by reducing barriers to care, minimizing missed appointments, and improving health outcomes, delivering a proven return on investment, as national data show that every \$1 spent on Medicaid NET saves \$11 in health care costs.

At TOA, we are committed to building healthy communities where everyone has access to the care they need, when they need it. LD 1835 moves us toward a transportation system that people can count on, delivering consistent, safe access to care across communities.

We respectfully urge you to support LD 1835.

Thank you for your commitment to the well-being of Maine's residents. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or would like additional information.

Submitted by:

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