

State of Maine | 132nd Legislature
Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
Testimony of Hannah A. Hudson on behalf of Maine Primary Care Association
May 9, 2025

Supporting:
LD 1835 “An Act to Improve Non-Emergency MaineCare Transportation”
Sponsored by Senator Bennett

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, I am Hannah Hudson, Director of Policy at Maine Primary Care Association (MPCA).

MPCA is a membership organization that represents Maine’s Community Health Centers (CHCs), also known as Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs). Maine's CHCs make up the largest independent primary care network in the state, providing high quality and accessible primary and preventive medical, behavioral, and dental health services for over 200,000 people (1 in 6 Mainers) at more than 100 service delivery sites in all 16 Maine counties.

As a proud member of the Moving Maine Network, we support LD 1835 and thank Senator Bennett and the other co-sponsors for championing this legislation. Transportation plays a critical role in the health and well-being of our patients. For many Mainers, especially those living in rural and underserved areas, MaineCare’s non-emergency transportation (NET) program is a lifeline. It ensures patients can access essential medical services like preventive care, cancer treatment, dialysis, substance use disorder treatment, and school-based services for children. Without reliable transportation, missed appointments can lead to worsening health conditions, increased emergency room visits, hospitalizations, and higher healthcare costs.

National research shows that for every \$1 spent on non-emergency transportation, \$11 in healthcare costs are avoided—a compelling case for making this system as efficient and effective as possible. Unfortunately, too many MaineCare members today experience significant challenges with the NET program, including scheduling difficulties, delays, and unresolved complaints. LD 1835 offers four timely improvements to address these issues:

1. Establishing a **public-facing dashboard** to increase transparency on trip performance, timeliness, safety, and service quality.
2. Creating an **independent ombudsman program** to help consumers resolve concerns comfortably and effectively.
3. Ensuring **stakeholder engagement** through regional advisory committees with real input into improving service delivery.

Maine’s CHCs see firsthand the impact of transportation barriers on patients’ health and well-being. Many CHCs already employ Community Health Workers and other personnel to help patients navigate these systems and, in some cases, provide in-house transportation when no other options exist. Improving MaineCare NET will not only benefit patients but also strengthen Maine’s entire healthcare system by reducing last-minute cancellations and ensuring providers can deliver timely, high-quality care.

LD 1835 represents a small investment with big returns—more completed rides, better health outcomes, and cost savings for Maine. We encourage the committee to pass this important legislation. On behalf of Maine’s Community Health Centers, thank you for considering our comments. Please do not hesitate to contact me directly at hudson@mepca.org with any follow-up questions.

Hannah Hudson, MA
Director of Policy
Maine Primary Care Association
hudson@mepca.org