

## **Testimony of Rebeca Ball-Curry, Resident of Vassalboro**

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

May 6, 2025

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

My name is Rebeca Ball-Curry. I am a resident of Vassalboro. I support LD 1835 and appreciate Senator Bennett and the other cosponsors for bringing this legislation forward.

I am an older adult with major traumatic brain injuries and physical disabilities that keep me from participating in all the activities I would like. For many years I ran a home care agency and have experience helping others with their transportation barriers. I'm currently being approved to be a representative to the Statewide Independent Living Council.

I am not able to drive but have created a working network of family and friends who can help me with rides to the doctor, to the grocery store, to run errands, and to interact with others socially. I also qualify for MaineCare non-emergency transportation and can utilize it when I have to – I am glad the broker that runs our local MaineCare service is based in-state. Because I served MaineCare consumers as an agency I often had to help a family navigate the agency in their area for transportation. This was when the contracted agency existed solely in the state of Maine and there were still often issues. With the out-of-state contracted agencies getting the bids, over the years I have seen a lack of quality in services provided to Maine citizens. I have helped people across the full spectrum of ages and needs. I cannot emphasize how troubling it is to put all the pieces of the puzzle together and I have experience. I can only imagine for the many consumers who have no experience or must navigate it for their first time.

I have helped others navigate MaineCare transportation and those who are completely dependent upon it are not as fortunate, especially when it is run by an out-of-state for-profit company like Modivcare. Fewer doctors accept MaineCare, in part because patients who must use MaineCare transportation to reach their appointments are frequently not on time and often rides are canceled. Existing MaineCare doctors are also dropping patients based on missed appointments and they now consider anything

less than 24 hours' notice as a missed appointment. We live in fear of losing any services and especially our medical providers.

From this bill you can see what is "on time" for rides and how much time you have to be ready to wait, getting to and from appointments. Being super early is preferable to us but know that it will use most of our day. That's when the system is actually working as it is required to.

You can't do anything but be on watch, so you don't miss your ride when it comes - whether on the way there, or the way home. And you try to make sure the appointment fits within the MaineCare transportation time parameters. The current transportation arrangement is that one driver and vehicle pick you up and takes you to the appointment. They are then sent on to pick up another consumer. You must check with the transportation agency to find what color make and model car that will be picking you up after your appointment and that you are out of your appointment and watching for them. I personally have seen written notices in offices stating that if you are using a specific transportation agency that they should call the office to make sure that you are there, so they don't leave a consumer stranded. As that practice usually runs behind and lags 20 to 45 minutes behind. You should know that isn't uncommon among provider offices. That's something else you must be vigilant about, so you don't miss your ride.

You may have never used MaineCare transportation yourself, but can you imagine the anxiety about all this and how stressful it is to be afraid of missing your appointment, or missing your ride there, or being stuck with no ride back home? All we are asking for is accountability and transparency from the agencies and a form of oversight that is making sure they remain so.

This bill will help in several ways:.

- WE NEED AN independent ombudsman program, to follow up on complaints and ensure people's concerns are resolved. Currently everything happens behind a closed door at DHHS and you never know what is really going on.
- I would also like to know more about the non-emergency transportation advisory committee in my region, and be able to participate. It's important that I and other community members are able to be in direct conversation and make recommendations to improve MaineCare transportation's efficiency, effectiveness, and customer satisfaction.
- Having everything in one place with the online public MaineCare transportation dashboard is critical. That way people know how to participate in the regional

advisory meetings, see the performance results in our regions, and can speak out and take action for service improvements.

Thank you for listening to my perspective. Please vote Ought to Pass.

Rebeca Ball-Curry