

Testimony in Support of LD 1835 *Presented to the Maine Legislature – Committee on Health and Human Services* May 9, 2025

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

My name is Carter Friend, Chief Executive Officer of York County Community Action Corporation (YCCAC). I submit this testimony in strong support of LD 1835, *An Act to Improve Nonemergency MaineCare Transportation*.

YCCAC's mission is to ensure that all people in York County thrive. We work with our partners to meet urgent needs, create opportunities to succeed, promote well-being, and advocate for just policies and practices.

YCCAC provides Head Start and Early Head Start, WIC nutrition and education, housing counseling, foreclosure prevention, legal advocacy, fuel assistance, weatherization, outreach and social work, financial education, and transportation. We also operate a federally-qualified health center providing medical, dental, and behavioral health care.

We are also one of eight designated Regional Transportation Providers in the state, and provide services under contract to MaineDOT, MaineDHHS and the Maine Department of Education.

Reliable transportation is a fundamental component of healthcare access. Yet, for too long, MaineCare recipients—particularly seniors, individuals with disabilities, and rural residents—have struggled with inconsistent and inadequate nonemergency transportation services, resulting in missed medical appointments, delayed treatments, and exacerbated health disparities. As a Community Action Agency, we have witnessed firsthand how transportation barriers contribute to inequitable health outcomes, deepening systemic challenges for vulnerable populations.

LD 1835 takes meaningful steps toward improving MaineCare transportation by increasing accountability, oversight, and transparency. The introduction of a publicly accessible performance dashboard ensures that brokers adhere to service standards and that monthly reporting on incidents will hold providers accountable. Equally important is the establishment of a nonemergency

transportation ombudsman program, which will provide MaineCare members with an avenue to voice concerns and seek resolutions, empowering patients rather than leaving them unheard.

Additionally, the creation of regional advisory committees will allow community voices—especially from rural and underserved areas—to shape recommendations that directly reflect real-world transportation needs. These provisions demonstrate that LD 1835 is not just a technical policy change, but rather a step toward a more equitable healthcare system where transportation is never a barrier to care.

We strongly urge the committee to pass LD 1835 and advance the well-being of MaineCare recipients. Reliable transportation is not a luxury—it is a necessity, and this bill ensures that all Mainers, regardless of geographic or socioeconomic status, have fair and timely access to medical services.

Thank you for your time and consideration.