

Testimony of Sylvia Harkins, Windham Maine

Testimony of Sylvia Harkins, resident of Windham, Maine.

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

May 9, 2025

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

My name is Debbie Condello, resident of Fryeburg, Maine. I am reading this testimony on behalf of Sylvia Harkins, resident of Windham, Maine.

I work for Southern Maine Agency on Aging. I support LD 1835 and appreciate Senator Bennett and the other cosponsors for bringing this legislation forward.

I work directly with older adults by connecting them to services in their communities. Many individuals who reach out to us do not have access to technology and/or cannot afford internet services to be able to navigate transportation systems. Over the last few years, we have received over 1,220 calls from older adults in Southern Maine alone who desperately need transportation services. I would like to share a few stories of individuals I that had the pleasure to work with and the challenges that they have faced.

Virginia, 90 years of age, lives in a small rural community. Her primary care doctor's office is 35 miles from her home. Her son usually takes her to her appointments but she wanted to reduce the time her son, who also lives 35 miles away, has to take off from work, so she elected to try Maine Care covered transportation. Given the long distance to her appointment, the ride was shared with other consumers. Virginia indicated that she did get to her appointment, but the trip was extended to accommodate additional stops. Virginia shared she was fearful riding in a car with people she did not know and the driver also took an unfamiliar route which was scary for her. Virginia was given a new prescription during her appointment, but knew she would not be able to stop to fill it on the way home. Virginia was so flustered she ended up calling her son anyway for a ride home so that she could fill the prescription that she needed.

Randall, 72 years of age, has diabetes requiring dialysis 3-days a week. He utilizes Maine Care covered transportation. His treatments can last longer than anticipated, leaving Randall worried he will miss his ride. Randall feels fatigued following treatment

and often is left outside to wait for his ride. Given the rural area where he lives, he has no other alternative for transportation.

Virginia and Randall both shared their concerns with me of burdening their families, the unreliability of transportation service, and the discomfort of waiting for transportation when ill. LD 1835 will increase awareness of adequate transportation needs in the community and a platform for them to be addressed.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please vote Ought to Pass.

Sincerely,

Sylvia Harkins