



May 9, 2025

Senator Henry Ingwersen, Chair
Representative Michele Meyer, Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
Cross Office Building, Room 209
Augusta, Maine 04333

Re: Testimony in Support of LD 1835, An Act to Improve Nonemergency
MaineCare Transportation

Dear Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and Members of the Joint Standing
Committee on Health and Human Services:

My name is Lauren Wille and I am the Legal Director at Disability Rights Maine. DRM is Maine's designated Protection and Advocacy agency, and our mission is to advance justice and equality by enforcing rights and expanding opportunities for people with disabilities in Maine. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of LD 1835.

Transportation, and the lack of meaningful access to it, is one of the most consistent issues that people with disabilities face as a barrier to full community inclusion. Lack of transportation prevents people with disabilities from getting to medical appointments, from getting to work, and from meaningfully participating in social activities.

Individuals who receive MaineCare are entitled to a service called "non-emergency transportation" (NET). This service provides Medicaid-funded transportation to and from other Medicaid-funded services. For example, a person who couldn't otherwise access transportation is entitled to NET to and from a doctor's appointment, or a physical therapist, so long as that service is funded by Medicaid/MaineCare. DRM receives a great many calls for assistance with transportation-related issues. Some people experience repeated and chronic cancellation of rides, or worse, scheduled rides simply not showing up. The result is that people miss work, they miss scheduled programming, or they miss medical appointments, sometimes for life-sustaining care such as cancer treatments or dialysis. Less frequently, though even more seriously, are

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MAINE'S PROTECTION AND ADVOCACY AGENCY FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

incidents where people have been dropped off at an incorrect location, or who are left stranded at a destination when the ride home does not show up. These situations are more than an inconvenience; they raise true safety concerns. Lack of access to reliable transportation can lead to bad health outcomes, loss of employment, loss of services, and it creates a great deal of unnecessary anxiety when people have to constantly worry if their ride will show up.

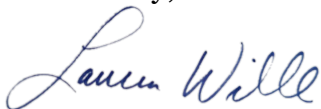
MaineCare contracts with transportation brokers to provide these services, and brokers arrange the transportation either by providing it directly, or by utilizing external transporters. LD 1835 requires the Department to publicly post performance measures of rides arranged by brokers, including the number of complaints filed in a quarter. It also requires monthly reporting on incidents ranging from serious ones that impact safety and accidents, to late rides and no-shows. This kind of public accountability is one step toward improving these important services. The requirement that the Department enter into a corrective action plan with a broker who is consistently not meeting contractual performance measures is also an important tool in improving a notoriously unreliable service.

Two of the most important aspects of this bill is the advisory committee, as well as an ombudsman program. DRM receives far more requests for advocacy assistance with NET issues than we are able to assist with. When we are unable to open a case, the resources that we are able to give a client are limited, and usually consist of advising a person of their right to file a complaint with the broker. An ombudsman program would be a great help to the members seeking assistance with NET issues.

For the foregoing reasons, DRM supports LD 1835.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lauren Wille". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lauren Wille, Esq.
Legal Director
Disability Rights Maine