

LD1559 An Act to Advance the State's Public Transit System by
Reinvigorating the Public Transit Advisory Council and Increasing
Funding

Senator Chapman, Representative Williams, and Honorable Committee Members:

My name is Cheryl Peabody. I am the Executive Director of Maine's Statewide Independent Living Council (Maine SILC). Maine SILC supports LD1559.

Maine SILC is currently working on five core goals. One of our goals revolves around transportation and reads, "Participate in workshops, webinars, and trainings hosted by partner agencies who are improving access to transportation for people with disabilities". Maine SILC is achieving this goal by being active in Moving Maine Network webinars and learning events, participating in steering committee and policy meetings and by participating in the Statewide Active Transportation Plan.

I was born with a visual impairment. My eyes are underdeveloped and there is no way to correct this. I see 20/200 in my left eye and 20/400 in my right eye. I have had three eye surgeries as an adult; two for cataracts and one because the artificial lens in my left eye dropped (rendering me with blurry vision). I have been treated for glaucoma for 35 years – thankfully, my pressures are stable with eye drops. I rely on family, friends, and local transit services to get to medical appointments, to get to in-person meetings for my work or join community events. I live in central Maine so, in my area, there are limited transit options. In rural areas, they often don't even have taxi services. As you know, Maine is a largely rural state.

We know that roughly 40,000 households in our vast rural state do not have access to a vehicle – and these households are more likely to be composed of people with less income, people with disabilities, people of color, immigrants, and older adults. It would be great to use some of the transportation models in southern Maine implemented in rural areas across the state.

As you're likely aware, and as is clear from speaking with federal sources and local transit providers, the one-time appropriation of funding in this bill is essential for

the fiscal cliff we're approaching. Without it, local transit services will cease to serve Mainers as they currently do.

In addition, a substantial increase in public transit funding – although very small compared to what we spend on roads and bridges - is fundamental for Mainers to be able to access opportunities and maintain quality of life in our communities.

Finally, the Public Transit Advisory Council did great and active work during its first two years that led to real change. It's critical that the Council be revitalized – people with disabilities are often left out of conversations that relate to their needs. The Advisory Council would allow a voice for this community to ensure that transit providers continue to serve people with disabilities in the best way possible.

As Maine SILC continues to work on our goals, we hope the Committee on Transportation will consider supporting LD1559.

Thank you for your time and consideration of LD1559.

Respectfully submitted,

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