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February 1, 2024

Testimony of Rep. Colleen Madigan introducing

LD 2128, An Act Regarding Nonemergency Transportation for MaineCare Members

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

Good afternoon Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and members of the Health and Human Services Committee. I am Colleen Madigan and I represent House District 64. I am here to present LD 2128, An Act Regarding Nonemergency Transportation for MaineCare Members. I submitted this bill because of events that happened to two of my constituents. I would like to tell you about their story.

Last year, a constituent of mine contacted me. She is elderly. She and her adult daughter live in their home in Waterville. Her daughter had quickly become very ill. There were numerous visits to the emergency room and a few inpatient hospital stays. She was bleeding from somewhere internally, but the source of this could not be identified. Upon being discharged from the hospital after a number of days at one point, she was given an appointment to return for a blood transfusion. MaineCare transportation was arranged. My elderly constituent was contacting me frequently during this time. She was extremely worried about her daughter. She and her daughter were scared. Her daughter was weak and fatigued daily. She looked sick and pale. She didn't know what was going on. When the MaineCare transportation provider arrived to pick her up for the transfusion appointment, she and her mother went to go together. The daughter needed her mother to accompany her. She was weak. She was afraid she would not be able to walk by herself through the medical building, ask for assistance, process the information from her doctor or ask the right questions. But, her mother was not allowed to accompany her. They were told that MaineCare transportation was solely for the person with the appointment. So a person who was very ill, worried about her ability to get around and understand what was happening to her was sent by herself to an appointment for a blood transfusion. Think about that.

As I stated above, my constituent was already letting me know what was going on with her daughter medically. She was absolutely outraged when she contacted me after this, and honestly, I can't blame her. My constituent and her daughter are no different from you and me. Perhaps you or a family member have had medical issues. Perhaps a family member has asked or needed you to come with them to an appointment. As those of you on this committee know, I am the caregiver for my elderly mother. She wants me to come with her to every appointment and not just because I am driving her. I was also the caregiver for my father before he died. I did the same for him, as he wanted. For myself, when I had melanoma a few years ago, I wanted my husband with me at those appointments. I am sure it is the same for you. Think about the last

District 64: Part of Waterville and part of Winslow

time you went to get a medical test of some kind or your doctor's office. They always ask you to sign paperwork for consent to treat and bill your insurance for the services. One of the other things they offer you is a sheet about patient rights. One of those rights is the right for you, as a patient, to have a person accompany you to your appointment or procedure. In mental health care, this right is even more clearly stated. You are all familiar with the Consent Decree. One of the requirements instituted in that agreement is that the Patient Rights form is required and in those rights, it is made clear that a person receiving mental health services has the right to have a person with them.

So, my question is if this is a right of patients, do MaineCare members not have the same rights as any other patient? Obviously, they do have the same rights. This bill just says that MaineCare members can have someone accompany them and that the contracts for MaineCare transportation must include a way of tracking and evaluating this.

Since I submitted this bill, I have had conversations with MaineCare transportation providers. I want to be clear; I know their job is hard. I know there are disagreements regarding the contracts. However, I want us to remember that this service has to work for MaineCare members and that includes people who want family or a trusted person to be with them when receiving medical health, mental health or substance use services.

Thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.