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Glenn "Chip" Curry  
Senator, District 11

THE MAINE SENATE  
132nd Legislature

3 State House Station  
Augusta, Maine 04333

*Testimony of Senator Chip Curry introducing*

**LD 841, "Resolve, to Study the Delivery of Emergency Medical Services to and Ferry Service Effects on Island Communities in the State"**

*Before the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety*

April 2, 2025

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, and distinguished colleagues of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety, my name is Chip Curry. I represent Senate District 11, which encompasses all 26 rural, coastal, and island communities of Waldo County. Thank you for the opportunity to present LD 841, "Resolve, to Study the Delivery of Emergency Medical Services to and Ferry Service Effects on Island Communities in the State."

This is a timely and targeted proposal that stems from two ongoing conversations — one in the Legislature and one unfolding in real time in our coastal communities.

In recent years, the Legislature has devoted considerable energy and attention to the challenges facing our state's emergency medical services. We've studied the EMS workforce crisis, the collapse of rural and volunteer-based EMS systems, and the rising demands placed on a patchwork of under-resourced responders. This committee has taken those concerns seriously — and I know many of you have sat through hours of testimony from fire chiefs, EMTs, and town officials, all of whom have described a system under strain.

LD 841 builds on that foundation by directing a working group to focus on a specific but critical aspect of that crisis: EMS access in Maine's island communities.

As the Committee may be aware, the Department of Transportation and the Maine State Ferry Service have recently floated the idea of changing overnight ferry berthing from the islands to the mainland. While the intent is to improve operational efficiency and address workforce needs, islanders, including my constituents, have sounded the alarm about what this shift could mean for emergency medical care.

As the *Bangor Daily News* and multiple outlets reported just a few months ago, local officials from Islesboro, North Haven, and other communities fear that losing an overnight ferry presence could delay response times in life-threatening situations.<sup>1</sup> For years, the ferry system has quietly played a backup role in emergency response — transporting patients and EMTs in off hours when every minute matters. If the ferries are no longer stationed on the island, who fills that gap? LifeFlight? Local volunteers? New emergency vessels? What are the costs, and what solutions are sustainable?

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<sup>1</sup> Walkup, Jules. "Plan to dock Maine ferries on the mainland worries island officials." *Bangor Daily News*, 30 December 2024, <https://www.bangordailynews.com/2024/12/27/midcoast/midcoast-government/new-maine-ferry-docking-proposal-concerns-island-officials/>.



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LD 841 doesn't assume the answers — it asks the right questions in the proper forum. The resolution directs the Maine Office of Community Affairs to convene a working group made up of ferry service officials, EMS professionals, island representatives, and key stakeholders. Their charge is simple: study how EMS is delivered to our island communities, assess how changes to ferry service may affect that delivery, and report back with recommendations by the end of the year.

This isn't a duplication of prior studies; rather, it's a focused extension. Where past efforts took a statewide or regional view, this resolve looks squarely at Maine's vulnerable islands, where the margins are thinner and the options fewer.

Critically, this approach brings island voices to the table before decisions are finalized — something the recent outcry makes clear has not always been the case.

LD 841 is about preparation, partnership, and ensuring that all Mainers — whether they live on the mainland or an island 12 miles offshore — can rely on timely, effective emergency medical care. I urge the committee to support this resolve and ensure this vital conversation continues with the urgency and respect it deserves.

Thank you, and I'm happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,

**Chip Curry**

State Senator, District 11

*Representing the twenty-six rural, coastal, and island communities of Waldo County*