



**Testimony of Marge Kilkelly on Behalf of  
the Maine Council on Aging to the  
Committee on Health and Human Services**

**In Favor of LD 263- Resolve, to Provide Rural  
Nonmedical Transportation Services to the Elderly and  
Adults with Disabilities Receiving Home and Community  
Benefits Under MaineCare**

Submitted April 2, 2025

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and the Members of the Committee on Health and Human Services.

My name is Marge Kilkelly, and I am a Policy Consultant for the Maine Council on Aging (MCOA) which is a broad, multidisciplinary network of over 140 organizations, businesses, municipalities, and older community members working to ensure we can all live healthy, engaged, and secure lives with choices and opportunities as we age at home and in community settings. The MCOA is a unifying force across sectors that is creating a new narrative about aging and older people in Maine with the goal of building local, statewide, and national support for the systemic changes needed to support our new longevity.

**I am testifying in favor of LD 263 Resolve, to Provide Rural Nonmedical Transportation Services to the Elderly and Adults with Disabilities Receiving Home and Community Benefits Under MaineCare.**

We appreciate Rep. Shagoury's determination in moving this issue forward. Through a dynamic and engaging planning process through our 2018 Wisdom Summit, we created the Blueprint for Action on Healthy Aging, which recommended exploring options for accessing non-medical transportation as a benefit under Medicaid. Following this recommendation, we introduced similar legislation in 2019 through LD 1142 and in 2021 through LD 17. Ultimately, the Department had agreed to launch a pilot program to help Members of Section 19 to access non-medical transportation. As that has not happened, we're back asking for your help in implementing this critically important program.

Transportation is one of the core social determinants of health. Access to transportation not only ensures people can get to medical care when they need it, it also helps people stay healthy and sometimes avoid the need for medical care altogether. That's because, in order to stay healthy, we need reliable and consistent access to employment, financial resources, healthy food, exercise and socialization. Socialization is especially critical since social isolation is now associated with increased rates of falls, coronary heart disease, stroke, suicide and depression.

According to Maine's 2025 Strategic Transit Plan, *72% of older Mainers live in communities without access to fixed route transit or one of the larger flex route transit systems*. Older adults who can't drive and don't have access to public transportation have to rely on others to get to medical appointments, the grocery store, social interaction, and the bank. If they don't live with a spouse or have a close family member, they have to rely on friends and neighbors to meet their basic transportation needs. If they don't have a solid network ready to help, an older person who cannot drive can deteriorate quickly due to a lack

of socialization and inadequate nutrition. Thus, ensuring that older people who cannot drive can remain active in their communities is critical to maintaining good health.

Currently, the MaineCare Section 19 Waiver, Home and Community Benefits for the Elderly and Adults with Disabilities, provides participants only with transportation for non-emergency medical care – essentially rides to the doctor. CMS federal guidelines, however, say non-medical transportation can be offered in order to enable participants to gain access to “...community services, activities and resources, as specified in the service plan. This service is offered in addition to medical transportation....Whenever possible, family, neighbors, friends or community agencies which can provide this service without charge are utilized.”

LD 263 directs the department to take advantage of this allowable service to ensure that everyone receiving Section 19 waiver services are not just getting rides to the doctor, but are also getting health-promoting rides to the grocery store, to a meal site, a community center and the bank. It also directs the department to develop a plan for how it could expand non-medical transportation services to all older MaineCare members who cannot drive and to make a report back to this committee.

In this state, we are working diligently to transform our health care system to one that keeps people healthy instead of paying to treat them when they are sick. Our MaineCare policies should embody these efforts and should also reflect our abiding belief that a just society ensures everyone can equally participate in community life, even if they cannot drive.

The ultimate goal is to make all kinds of transportation services more widely available and affordable, and help people feel comfortable using these services. To achieve this, we need an expansive vision for expanding transportation services in Maine. We believe that LD 263 takes a little step in the right direction by expanding transportation services in Maine to those who most need them and who cannot afford to pay for them. Taking this step will help us build out the transportation network that can begin to be available to everyone.

We are committed to working with anyone who wants to take the next step too!

We urge your support of LD 263.