



Testimony in Support of LD 1359

Provided by: Kirk A. Bellavance

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Good afternoon Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation. My name is Kirk Bellavance and I serve as the Senior Transportation Director for Kennebec Valley Community Action Program – KVCAP. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to the critical need for increased state funding of public transportation, as outlined in LD 1359.

For nearly six decades, KVCAP has been a cornerstone of our communities, providing essential services that empower individuals to overcome the barriers of poverty and achieve self-sufficiency. A critical component of this mission is our role as the recognized Public Transportation Provider for Region 4, offering vital demand-response, curb-to-curb, and door-to-door public transit services. Each year, thousands of our residents rely on KVCAP public transportation to access employment, healthcare, education, and other life-sustaining resources.

Increasing state funding will provide the crucial additional support for addressing our current service limitations. These include the following:

- Our limited service areas in Augusta, Waterville and Skowhegan, which exclude the surrounding rural communities from essential services and economic opportunity
- Our current weekday operating hours of 8:30am to 4:00pm also restrict access for many residents.
- The ability to expand services to meet growing community needs that will improve accessibility and provide more comprehensive public transportation options.

This increased and dedicated state funding is essential for ensuring equitable access, strengthening the regional economy, creating a sustainable system and supporting vulnerable populations. A greater state contribution for public transportation will allow us to expand services to unserved rural areas and extend our operating hours, benefiting all residents.

It is worth noting how the full funding of public transportation systems during the pandemic really highlighted their crucial role. Accessible public transit proved vital in maintaining essential connections and providing crucial support to our communities during that challenging time.

We urge this committee to recognize the disproportionate burden placed on local communities to fund public transportation and to make a significant investment in a dedicated and sustainable state funding mechanism. This investment will not only support organizations like KVCAP in fulfilling our mission but will also ensure a more equitable, accessible, and economically vibrant future for all residents of Kennebec and Somerset counties, and indeed, the entire State of Maine.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am available to answer any questions you may have.