

**Testimony in Support of LD1359: Resolve, to Direct the Department of Transportation to Develop Practices Regarding Public Transit**

**To:** The Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation

**From:** Steven Richard, Director of Transportation Services, Penquis

**Date:** April 23, 2025

**Subject:** Support for LD1359 - Enabling Better Service Through Improved Practices

Chair Crafts, Chair Nangle, and Honorable Members of the Transportation Committee,

My name is Steven Richard, Director of Transportation Services at Penquis, serving Penobscot and Piscataquis counties. I am here today on behalf of Penquis to express our strong support for LD1359 and explain how it will directly enhance our ability to serve Maine people.

Maine faces significant unmet transportation needs, as highlighted by the recent PTAC report showing only 11% of need is currently met. LD1359 addresses critical operational hurdles that limit our capacity. It proposes practical steps for transparency, rural funding equity, and healthcare coordination – all aligning with PTAC recommendations and vital for providers like us.

First, enhancing transparency – this enables better planning: LD1359's call for publishing funding distributions supports a key PTAC recommendation. For Penquis, clear, timely funding information is essential for effective budgeting, service planning, and accountability to our communities. Knowing the formulas helps us understand the process and builds trust, enabling efficient operations and strategic planning.

Second, it Supports Rural Transit –

Addressing the local match requirement tackles a major barrier, noted repeatedly by PTAC. Securing the high local match for federal grants like FTA 5311 is difficult in our rural communities and restricts our ability to leverage federal funds. Reducing this burden, as LD1359 proposes, would be transformative. It would allow Penquis to potentially access significant additional federal dollars, enabling us to maintain routes, replace aging vehicles (part of a \$108M statewide need identified by PTAC), expand service hours, or launch new routes in underserved areas.

Third, it Improves Access to vital services:

LD1359's focus on MaineDOT/DHHS collaboration addresses another critical need identified by PTAC. Many residents rely on us for non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT). Navigating different requirements is complex. Better state-level coordination can streamline processes, reduce our administrative burden, and allow us to offer more reliable and efficient transportation to healthcare appointments, fulfilling a vital community need.

Conclusions:

From Penquis' perspective, LD1359 represents meaningful progress. It offers practical tools – transparency, fairer rural funding, better agency coordination – that directly empower us to operate more efficiently and expand services. This resolve supports PTAC recommendations and addresses real-world challenges. Passing LD1359 enables us to provide more rides, connect more communities, and better meet critical transportation needs.

We urge you to vote favorably, "Ought to Pass," on LD1359.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Steven Richard  
Director of Transportation Services  
Penquis  
Bangor, ME