

Testimony in Support of LD 1451 – An Act to Strengthen Coordination of Community Transportation

Provided by: Kara Hay

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Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation,

My name is Kara Hay, and I serve as the President and CEO of Penquis. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of LD 1451, An Act to Strengthen Coordination of Community Transportation in Maine.

Penquis is a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping Maine people improve their financial stability. We offer more than 70 programs that support access to transportation, housing stability, school readiness, and healthy lives. Every day, we help people navigate complex challenges, and in doing so, we see how reliable, coordinated transportation helps individuals stay connected to healthcare, employment, and essential services.

We operate with a no-wrong-door approach. That means that when someone calls us for a ride to a medical appointment, we might also connect them to heating assistance, childcare, or housing support. In Region 3, which includes Penobscot and Piscataquis Counties, more than half of our Non-Emergency Transportation (NET) clients access an average of nearly three additional Penquis services. This is what coordination looks like in action—when transportation is integrated, not isolated.

Each year, our team manages over 294,000 calls, averaging more than 1,100 per open day, and completes tens of thousands of trips across Penobscot and Piscataquis Counties. These include:

- 20,615 rides for dialysis patients
- 8,503 trips supporting family visits and reunification through DHHS
- 6,185 rides to help people access food and groceries
- 5,622 urgent trips, including hospital discharges

LD 1451 supports and strengthens this kind of work. It recognizes that access to transportation is essential to the success of programs in healthcare, aging, education, and economic development. It reinforces the value of local Mobility Management and supports regional planning efforts that give communities the tools to create transportation solutions tailored to their unique needs and circumstances.

We've seen firsthand how Mobility Management empowers our neighbors. Through a grant from the National Aging and Disability Transportation Center, we've been engaging older adults and people with disabilities across rural communities from Millinocket and Milo to Greenville and Dover-Foxcroft. These conversations are shaping our approach and helping us better align services with real needs.

We're also thinking ahead. With support from MaineDOT, we've begun adding fuel-efficient vehicles to our fleet, including a plug-in hybrid SUV. These investments demonstrate how regional transportation providers like Penquis are already working toward greater efficiency and sustainability, goals that LD 1451 can help accelerate through stronger coordination, shared planning, and expanded local capacity.

Ultimately, LD 1451 provides the framework to expand what's working, increase collaboration, and make smart use of the resources already on the ground. It helps strengthen Maine's ability to connect people with the opportunities, health care, and community support that help them thrive.

Thank you for your leadership in advancing this bill and for your ongoing commitment to meeting the needs of all Mainers.

With appreciation,

Kara Hay
President & CEO
Penquis