

LD 1451 – An Act to Strengthen Coordination of Community Transportation

Testimony of John Brautigam, Esq. for Legal Services for Maine Elders Joint Standing Committee on Transportation

April 23, 2025

Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts, and esteemed members of the Transportation Committee.

My name is John Brautigam, and I represent Legal Services for Maine Elders. LSE provides free legal help for Mainers aged 60 and older when their basic human needs are at stake.

We are pleased to testify in support of LD 1451 and we thank the sponsor for bringing this forth. This bill addresses a barrier we encounter every day: transportation access for the people we serve.

Older Mainers, especially in rural communities, often face serious mobility challenges. Many live alone, do not drive, and lack reliable transportation to attend medical appointments, obtain groceries, or participate in community life. Critically, transportation barriers also make it difficult for some of our clients to access legal services — including hearings for protection orders, landlord-tenant disputes, public benefits appeals, and guardianship proceedings.

We commend the sponsor of LD 1451 for taking a thoughtful and coordinated approach to these challenges. The bill creates a cross-agency council that includes the Departments of Transportation, Health and Human Services, Labor, Education, and Economic Development. By breaking down silos, the council will be able to align transportation resources more efficiently — something that is sorely needed in our current patchwork system.

We also support the creation of mobility management hubs across eight regions of the state. These hubs can serve as central, user-friendly access points for various modes of transportation, increasing independence for older adults and people with disabilities. Just as importantly, they allow local organizations and transit providers to coordinate services and funding — making limited dollars go farther.

The appointment of a state mobility management coordinator is a vital step toward real progress. It will ensure that coordination is not just a theoretical goal, but an active and staffed initiative. We

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particularly appreciate the bill's emphasis on leveraging federal cost-sharing guidance, which will allow Maine to remove outdated barriers and make full use of available funding streams.

Lack of a ride should never be the reason someone misses a cancer screening, a court hearing, or an opportunity to connect with community. LD 1451 offers a smart, scalable framework to meet this moment. It recognizes that older residents, people with disabilities, and low-income Mainers are not transportation "afterthoughts" — they are central to each and every community in Maine.

We respectfully urge the Committee to vote Ought to Pass on LD 1451. Thank you for your time, and I would be pleased to answer any questions.