

## **Testimony in Support of LD1451: An Act to Strengthen Coordination of Community Transportation**

Good afternoon, Senator Nangles, Representative Crafts, and distinguished members of the Committee. My name is Steven Richard, and I am the Director of Transportation for Penquis, a community action agency serving Penobscot and Piscataquis counties.

I am here today to express Penquis's strong support for LD 1451, An Act to Strengthen Coordination of Community Transportation.

For years, Penquis has been on the front lines of providing essential transportation services in our communities. We see firsthand the challenges faced by our neighbors – older adults, individuals with disabilities, low-income families, and rural residents – in accessing healthcare, jobs, education, and basic necessities. We operate various transportation programs, striving to bridge these gaps, but we also recognize the inherent limitations and inefficiencies within this sometimes fragmented system.

Transportation resources in Maine, both state and federal, are significant, yet they often operate in silos. Different agencies and programs serve overlapping populations with separate fleets, funding streams, and administrative structures. This lack of coordination means missed opportunities – opportunities to serve more people, provide more rides, and operate more efficiently.

At Penquis, we know that coordination is not just a buzzword; it is a practical necessity. When we collaborate with other providers and agencies, even informally, we stretch limited dollars further. We reduce empty seats on vehicles, optimize routes, and share resources. This makes sound economic sense, ensuring taxpayer and agency funds are used more effectively. More importantly, it makes programmatic sense, leading to better, more reliable, and more accessible transportation options for the people who need them most.

LD 1451 provides the framework Maine needs to move from ad-hoc collaboration to a strategic, statewide system of coordination. Establishing the Maine Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility Management, creating regional mobility management hubs, and appointing a state coordinator are critical steps. This structure will foster the interagency partnerships required to break down silos, leverage federal funding more effectively, remove barriers to cost-sharing, and implement a true mobility management approach focused on the rider's needs.

This bill acknowledges that ensuring access to transportation is fundamental to the health, economic vitality, and self-sufficiency of Maine residents and communities. It provides a commonsense approach to improving our transportation network by making the whole greater than the sum of its parts.

Penquis is committed to being an active partner in building this more coordinated future. We strongly urge this committee to vote Ought to Pass on LD 1451.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Steven Richard  
Director of Transportation Services  
Penquis  
Bangor, ME