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

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

My name is Will Hayward, and I'm an Associate at Moose Ridge Associates, delivering testimony on behalf of Maine Community Action Partnership, a statewide organization dedicated to improving the quality of life of Maine people by advocating for, promoting and supporting the work of the Maine community action agencies (CAPs). We respectfully submit the following testimony in support of LD 1451, An Act to Strengthen Coordination of Community Transportation.

Our state's greatest resource is our people, and our state's policies shape people's possibilities. In Community Action, we create conditions that invite children to learn and adults to apply their skills, tapping into the hidden potential in our communities. Through our Whole Family approach, we build a family's capacity for sustained stability and economic growth. We invest in the family's well-being, we let them drive their own story, and we have tangible success.

Transportation forms the vital link between many services that community action agencies and others provide and the people across Maine who access these services. We know that reliable transportation can provide the pathway to opportunities for connection, independence, and prosperity. And yet we see missed opportunities for coordination and limited access to services that hold people back. The interagency council proposed in this bill would be positioned to advance coordination. To share a few examples that community action agencies report that could potentially be addressed through enhanced coordination:

- Some CAPs report the state requires multiple background checks for the same drivers because different state agencies both require background checks but have no method to coordinate. Without coordination between the state agencies, the process of completing this duplicative process becomes a cost in time for the drivers and the CAPs, and an extra expense for the CAPs.
- The current uncoordinated system limits the ability of CAPs to communicate directly with clients. For DHHS MaineCare trips CAPs and clients have to communicate through the Non-Emergency Transportation (NET) broker, whereas for other types of DHHS-funded trips the CAPs communicate directly with the client. Communication with clients is essential to providing quality rides.

- Our fragmented community transportation system can make it extremely difficult for providers to coordinate around having different clients on vehicles, even if it may save money and the clients may have the same destination.

As these examples demonstrate, there is ample opportunity to strengthen coordination in community transportation. LD 1451 achieves this by advancing state-level coordination and supporting the adoption of Mobility Management Hubs. By building on best practices in community transportation, LD 1451 creates a smart, collaborative approach to solving the challenges we face in connecting people to services through transportation. We know Maine families are positioned to thrive when they have the tools and resources necessary to sustain themselves and grow their potential. Reliable, community-based transportation is one of those crucial tools. We urge the committee to vote Ought to Pass on LD 1451.