

Testimony of Mireille Kabongo, Resident of Portland

Supporting: LD 1451 An Act to Advance Coordination of Community Transportation -
Sponsored by Senator Mike Tipping

April 23, 2025

Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts, and Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation:

My name is Mireille Kabongo and I am a resident of Portland. I support LD 1451 and appreciate Senator Tipping and the other cosponsors for bringing this legislation forward.

I am a person with a disability. I am a Community Transportation Leader and a Mobility Liaison with the Greater Portland Council of Governments. Since 2017, I have been speaking about problems with our transportation system, because I have a transportation barrier. This is not the first time I have testified.

I don't know if the state listens to us. I don't know if you see us struggle with transportation. There are older Mainers, Mainers like me with disabilities, Mainers with low incomes. There are people who cannot drive.

Without transportation, you have nothing. You can't do anything without it. Lack of transportation stops my life. Sometimes I can't get to work, or to the grocery store. You are not able to be part of society. I have a disability, I don't want to stay home. I have worked because I didn't want to stay at home.

If you want to go to the grocery store, you need to ask a friend or family member to take you. We also need to socialize - but maybe you can't get to places on the weekend, or you can't get to church, or to visit family. On top of my disability, in 2022, I had a stroke. I was alone and I could not afford the food I needed or transportation.

When I was working, I had to stop using paratransit, because you have get to work on time. Paratransit would be late to pick me up, or would forget to pick me up at the end of the day. I had to use Uber instead. But Uber is expensive.

We need more public transportation. And we need it to make people's lives better now. Not in 2045, like the local plans say.

When I got my work permit, I went to the Department of Labor, and they said I could use RTP for transportation to work. At the same time, I started to go to Portland Adult Education and I needed transportation to get there. And we need transportation not just to get to the hospital or medical appointments.

We need DHHS to work with the Department of Transportation, and the Department of Labor, and the Department of Education. We have these different resources and we need all the parts of the system to work together, to make transportation better.

Also, in Cumberland County they talk about Mobility Managers, who can help someone find transportation. We really need a Mobility Manager. It is very hard to navigate the public transportation system. And the systems need to work together. A Mobility Manager can help connect people with these different resources.

The last thing I want to say is this. Today, you have the authority to change this. We are depending on you to make the right choice. To make transportation better, so we can get to our jobs, so we can be out in the community, so we can get to essential services. You can improve transportation for every Mainer. Or we can continue with the problems we have now.

Thank you for your consideration. I urge you to vote Ought to Pass.

Sincerely,

Mireille Kabongo, Portland