

Testimony of Kristi Woods, Resident of Augusta

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

April 7, 2025

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

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

I am a registered nurse, and now a person with disabilities who has mobility and transportation barriers.

In my time as a nurse in Kennebec County, I witnessed several patients experience transportation challenges. Namely, I saw patients having difficulty getting to and from appointments, especially when coming from more rural areas. Those who were unable to drive or did not have a reliable vehicle were particularly vulnerable, as they did not have a consistent way of getting to scheduled appointments if they did not have family or friends who could bring them.

Currently, I am a MaineCare member and I'm unable to drive because of my neurological disorders. Even though I live a mile down the road from here at the statehouse, without MaineCare's services I do not have a ride to receive medical care. Maine care Transportation is not perfect all the time—sometimes no one is available to staff my ride and I must cancel my appointment. And I have missed my appointment before because they had to pick up other members first. However, this option is typically my only option, and when it is fully staffed it has been helpful for continuity of care. I have been able to call and speak to staff about my medical needs, like for a non-smoking wheelchair accessible van—and I was able to talk with someone who kindly addressed them. Had they not been able to, my health would have further deteriorated.

Although I would prefer to have care closer to home, my case is too complex, and I must cross county lines to go to providers for more specialized care. Appointments over 30 miles away require coordinating with my primary physician to apply for waivers from MaineCare transportation to transport me. I am a skilled advocate for myself, and I have a doctor willing to help. However, I have learned that not everybody is as lucky.

On the other hand, having family members be my primary drivers is also out of the question for me, as I am sure it is for many. My family lives 1-2.5 hours away and works normal business hours. My domestic partner's job isn't flexible enough to take me to all the appointments I have—which average once a week. Ubers and taxis are scarce and unreliable in this area, and

may not be able to load in my wheelchair. I have experienced difficulty trying to find one for myself and also as a hospital nurse trying to get rides home for discharged patients. It is even more difficult if you live outside of Augusta.

Furthermore, I am unaware of any other transportation options to do errands during normal business hours, if I were to lose Personal Support Specialist services that I receive through MaineCare. Recently, I have been approved for SSDI, which means I will be losing MaineCare due to income guidelines - and I do not know how I will get transportation for my medical care. If telehealth does not get expanded beyond September, this will also create more barriers to accessing medical services. Having a Mobility Management Hub that is able to help brainstorm ways for me to continue accessing transportation is vital for my health and quality of life - and will be helpful for those in similar situations to find resources available to them.

Thank you for listening to my perspective. I urge you to vote Ought to Pass.

Sincerely, Kristi Woods