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Testimony in Support of LD 1835, An Act to Improve Non-emergency MaineCare Transportation

May 9, 2025

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and members of the Joint
Standing Committee on Health and Human Services,

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 1835, An Act to Improve Non-emergency MaineCare 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. MaineCare's Non-Emergency Transportation (NET) services are perhaps the most vital of these transportation services: they provide connections to medical care, mental health treatment, and other services. MaineCare NET connects clients to essential health services that provide the opportunity to build healthy, successful communities.

In order for MaineCare NET to be successful, however, we must always be asking how we can strengthen and sustain its services to best serve the people of Maine. LD 1835 takes meaningful steps to achieve this. By requiring the Office of MaineCare Services to maintain a public-facing dashboard with key performance indicators by region and service, we can ensure accountability and visibility that will shine a light on how NET can be improved. By establishing an independent ombudsman program, we can ensure that any issues that are encountered are dealt with in a fair and impartial manner. And finally, by establishing regional nonemergency transportation advisory committees, it ensures that the voices of those directly affected by challenges in NET can have their voices elevated and heard.

Maine's community action agencies understand the critical role that NET plays in building a healthy and thriving Maine, and LD 1835 will help a more efficient system that will result in fewer missed appointments, lower barriers to service, and ultimately a healthier Maine. We urge the committee to vote Ought to Pass on LD 1835.