

Testimony of Leeann Brionez - Resident of Westbrook - May 9, 2025

Supporting: LD 1835 An Act to Improve Nonemergency MaineCare Transportation

- Sponsored by Senator Richard Bennett

Good afternoon, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Joint Committee on Health and Human Services:

My name is Leeann Brionez and I am a resident of Westbrook. **I support this bill** and appreciate Senator Bennett and the other cosponsors for bringing this legislation forward.

I am a Mobility Liaison with the Greater Portland Council of Governments. I have mobility issues from being hit by a car when I was crossing the street in December 2023. The accident harmed me in multiple ways, including blinding me in my left eye and breaking both my legs to the point I can't run or jog and my gait is much worse. I fall often and I am not able to get back up on my own. I also have an intellectual disability. In addition, I experience seizures.

For various reasons listed above, I am not able to drive. I used to have to use Logisticare (now Modivcare) to get to medical appointments. They were very unreliable and often late. They need to carry multiple passengers and one driver was a smoker and needed to stop and get out to take a smoke break after dropping other riders. So I had to wait while he smoked, before being the last person dropped off. They also utilized a lot of drivers who don't speak English. It was very hard for me and other passengers to communicate with them about necessary things during our rides. It was also clear that some drivers didn't care about their passengers. My friends also have had many problems getting rides with Modivcare.

I finally submitted my concerns in writing, which was required according to the website. (And is not ADA-accessible under the law.) I sent it to the address indicated. A week later my letter was returned in the mail. It had a letter attached to it that said, "Leeann, we have received your letter, but it doesn't meet the regulations." What regulations? It had a number to call if I had questions, so I called the number. The person who answered said, "Well, I don't work for this department, so I don't know," and transferred me. Another person answered and said "We can't help you," and hung up. My friend have also sent in complaints and they get the same response. Clearly the system is completely broken.

I don't use Modivcare now because of all that happened. I currently live in a group home setting and the staff can get me to my appointments. And sometimes I take the METRO bus.

We need the independent ombudsman program that is proposed in this bill. We need to know our concerns are actually being followed up on and treated seriously, and that problems will be resolved. I also would like to be aware of and participate in the non-emergency transportation advisory committee in my region. And the online MaineCare transportation dashboard would help with transparency and to (re)build trust.

Thank you for listening to my perspective. **Please vote Ought to Pass on LD 1835.**

Sincerely,

Leeann Brionez