



**Consumer Council System of Maine**  
A Voice for Consumers of Mental Health Services

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Good morning, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and esteemed members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

My name is Simonne Maline. I am the Executive Director for the Consumer Council System of Maine. I am here today on behalf of the CCSM to testify in support on **LD 1835: "An Act to Improve Nonemergency MaineCare Transportation"**

The Consumer Council System of Maine is a public instrumentality written into State Statute by the Maine Legislature to serve in an advisory capacity and to provide legislators with guidance and advice regarding the delivery of effective and appropriate adult mental health services from those served by them. We understand that the progressive treatment program and court commitment processes are already permitted by state law.

This critical legislation addresses long-standing gaps in accountability, transparency, and quality assurance within Maine's non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) system, ensuring that MaineCare members—particularly our most vulnerable neighbors and members of our Mental Health Peer Community—can reliably access healthcare services.

MaineCare's NEMT program is a lifeline for thousands of Mainers, including seniors, people with disabilities, low-income families, and individuals in recovery. Yet systemic failures—missed rides, unsafe conditions, and a lack of recourse for complaints—have repeatedly compromised care. LD 1835 offers a comprehensive solution by doing the following:

**1. Increasing Transparency**

The mandated public dashboard (Sec. 1, §3197) will provide real-time data on broker performance, including trip completion rates, complaints, and safety incidents. **This empowers members, advocates, and policymakers to identify and address failures.**

**2. Enforcing Accountability**

The bill requires corrective action plans for brokers who consistently fail metrics (e.g., on-time trips, vehicle safety), with public reporting **to ensure follow-through.**

**3. Centering Lived Experience**

Regional advisory committees (Sec. 2, §3198) will elevate voices from riders, tribes, healthcare providers, and transporters **to guide improvements tailored to local needs.**

**4. Providing Independent Oversight for Best Results**

The ombudsman program (Sec. 3, §3199) creates an independent advocate to resolve complaints and protect member rights, free from conflicts of interest.



This bill and the resulting work would have a real-world impact. For example, it would help (a small sampling):

- A mother in Aroostook County missed dialysis because her ride never arrived.
- An individual with PTSD who also uses a wheelchair stranded after the driver arrived with a vehicle that did accommodate a wheelchair.
- A recovering Mainer denied timely transit to a methadone clinic, risking relapse.

These are not hypothetical examples; we have heard them repeatedly in our statewide listening events and they are preventable tragedies.

LD 1835 ensures MaineCare transportation meets the dignity and urgency these situations demand.

In closing, transportation barriers should never dictate health outcomes. By passing LD 1835, Maine can build a on NEMT system rooted in equity, safety, and accountability. We urge the committee to vote **"Ought to Pass"** and stand with MaineCare members who depend on this vital service.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

*Simonne Maline*

Executive Director