



# Maine Developmental Disabilities Council

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12 February 2021

Testimony supporting LD 17, Resolve To Provide Rural Nonmedical Transportation Services to the Elderly and Adults with Disabilities Receiving Home and Community Benefits under the MaineCare Program

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and the distinguished members of the Committee on Health and Human Services

My name is Rachel Dyer, and I am the associate director of the Maine Developmental Disabilities Council. Councils on Developmental Disabilities were created through the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act (DD Act) in 1970. Maine's DD Council has been advocating for individuals with Developmental Disabilities (DD) for over 40 years. The DD Council is a federally-funded, independent organization with members from across the state, including persons with disabilities, family members, and representatives of public and private agencies which provide services and/or funding for services for individuals with developmental disabilities. As required in federal law, we are involved in advocacy, capacity building and systemic change activities, with the goal that individuals with developmental and other disabilities of all ages are fully included, integrated and involved in their communities and the decisions impacting their lives.

The challenges of transportation for Mainers who do not drive, especially those who live in rural areas, have been well documented. Many people with disabilities do not have the option to drive cars and lack access to other modes of transportation. This includes many, perhaps most, recipients of Home and Community Based Services. Transportation is available to access to medical services and through very limited public transit services (often offered as private/ public partnerships and very difficult to sustain financially). Accessible transportation is often in very short supply. The lack of transportation options in many communities is a major barrier to employment and limits access to the types of civic, social and recreational opportunities that are necessary for full community engagement.

MDDC encourages the Committee to support the development and maintenance of a permanent and effective public transportation system, with particular regard to accessibility; expanding local volunteer driver networks; and piloting a program that provides vouchers for individuals to purchase their own transportation services. Travel vouchers are a tool for rural communities to increase individual choice and control related to supports. Increasing access to transportation increases access to the types of activities and relationships that provide meaning to our lives in a way that anyone with a car generally takes for granted.

I was disappointed to note that while the discussion referenced "Home and Community Based Services", this bill is actually limited to recipients of Maine Care Section 19. In Maine, Home and Community Based Services also include recipients of Maine Care Sections 18, 20, 21, and 29. Please consider expanding the eligibility to include those other recipients of Home and Community Based Services.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.