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**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**

**LD 166 – An Act To Allow Participants In The Qualified Medicare Beneficiary Program To Qualify For Mainecare Transportation Services**

Greetings Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services. My name is Lori Parham and I am the State Director for AARP Maine. AARP is the nation's largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering Americans 50 and older to choose how they live as they age. On behalf our more than 200,000 members statewide, thank you for the opportunity to share testimony on the critical issue of transportation for Maine residents.

**I am sharing testimony today in support of LD 17 and neither for nor against LD 166, both related to transportation for older Mainers.**

The following principles set out AARP's broad goals for policymakers and community stakeholders to provide a variety of transportation options to meet the needs of their residents.

- Promote affordable transportation options
- Ensure the transportation system is accessible
- Promote healthy communities through sustainable transportation infrastructure
- Foster coordinated transportation services and assets
- Strengthen federal leadership in transportation

In the year 2021, we need an integrated and substantive approach to address Maine's transportation challenges. Transportation of today needs to be about technology investments that enable us to get more benefit from our existing investments. Infrastructure in 2021 is as much about technology as it is about roads, bridges and public transit.



As a proposed pilot, LD 17 is an opportunity to invest a small amount of funding to test a model in rural Maine, where we continue to see increased need that has been highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Building non-emergency transportation into the care plan could go a long way to addressing social isolation and mental health issues for our most isolated residents. Access to transportation in rural areas also continues to be a top issue raised by our Network of Age-Friendly Communities. Transportation is the thread that links so many other issues facing older Mainers together.

As this committee continues to consider access to transportation in Maine, we believe it will be important to look at broader, more integrated, and robust solutions that contemplate both public and private funding for addressing Maine's transportation needs. While we appreciate the intent of LD 166, and understand the need, we would prefer to see state leaders begin to address the bigger transportation challenges we face and invest dollars to begin to serve more people in an integrated way, taking advantage of the innovate technology now available to build a stronger public/private model for transportation. The attached report *Creating the Transportation System We Want: Building Blocks for the Road Ahead* lays out some of the opportunities we might consider.

Thank you for your consideration.

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