

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”

*Testimony in support provided by Pedro A. Vazquez, Chair South
Portland Human Rights Commission
February 10, 2021*

Members of the Committee:

Human rights are inherent to all human beings. They are defined and established in more than 80 international legal instruments and include fundamental protections of human dignity, needs, and freedoms, such as food, housing, privacy, personal security, and democratic participation. These of course are dependent on an individual's access to transportation.

In my professional capacity, I have represented individuals living with disabilities and their families in Administrative Law proceedings throughout the United States. In this role, I am often both a source of support and confidant to my clients. I hear their struggles and have intimate connection to the obstacles that exist and make their lives difficult.

Lack of reliable transportation is often a structural barrier that prevents people living with disabilities from fully participating in community life.

According to the American Association of People with Disabilities, adults with disabilities are twice as likely as those without disabilities to have inadequate transportation (31 percent vs. 13 percent). 1 Of the nearly 2 million people with disabilities who never leave their homes, 560,000 never leave home because of transportation difficulties. Minimal or nonexistent transit services in rural areas severely curtail the mobility of people with disabilities and keep them from jobs, medical appointments, community life, and independence.

Equity in transportation is an important human rights issue. It is critical to the independence of people with disabilities and their ability to contribute economically, socially, and politically.

In closing, I must say that it is important that careful attention is applied when crafting the framework of this pilot program in order to avoid replicating some of the exploitative practices that we have seen within the transportation broker model previously in use.

I encourage you to support LD17 and am available for any questions.