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Maine People's Alliance

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services: my name is Adam Zuckerman and I am the lobbyist for Maine People's Alliance. Our 32,000 members stretch from Kittery to Fort Kent.

I am pleased today to testify in favor of Senator Chloe Maxmin's 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."

When I was eleven years old, my grandfather was diagnosed with dementia and could no longer drive or live alone. Luckily, he was able to move in with my family in Portland. With two cars, my parents were able to drive him to his numerous doctors' appointments, shop for him at the grocery store, and pick up his prescriptions.

Unfortunately, many seniors and people with disabilities are not privileged to have such ample and easy access to transportation. Many in our state, the most rural in the nation, live in areas without public transportation.

Transportation is a lifeline for seniors and people with disabilities. You can't stay healthy if you can't get to the doctor or fill your prescription at the local pharmacy. For many Maine seniors and people with disabilities, tasks like these can be next to impossible without access to safe and reliable transportation. No one should be denied access to care simply because they don't have the means to transport themselves.

Over the past months in quarantine, many of us have a new appreciation for how hard it can be to feel isolated. For many seniors and people with disabilities without access to transportation, that isolation started long before COVID. Yes, LD 17 is about access to groceries and medicine, but it is more than that. It also about making our communities whole. It is about allowing everyone to participate in our society, about not casting aside the elderly and disabled.

Last session, this bill out with a divided report. Some expressed a need for more research. However, the Department of Health and Human Services has already done that work. They support this pilot program.

I do as well and would encourage this committee to support this crucial lifeline for Maine's seniors and people with disabilities. Thank you.