



Transportation Committee  
Testimony from Angela Oechsle, Project>Login Program Director,  
Educate Maine

### **In Support Of**

L.D. 1451: An Act to Strengthen Coordination of Community Transportation

Wednesday, April 23, 2025

Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts, and esteemed members of the Committee,

My name is Angela Oechsle, and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of Educate Maine, a nonprofit organization committed to increasing educational attainment and workforce readiness across Maine. We are proud to support LD 1451: An Act to Strengthen Coordination of Community Transportation, as we believe that accessible and well-coordinated transportation is foundational to educational equity and success—especially in rural communities.

Through our programs like Project>Login, which fosters digital skills and career exploration, and Maine Career Catalyst, we have seen firsthand how transportation barriers limit access to learning, training, and work-based learning experiences that are critical to Maine's future.

In many rural regions of our state, a student's zip code determines not only what education they can access—but if they can access it at all. From dual-enrollment courses at community colleges to adult workforce training programs, many opportunities are simply out of reach for those without reliable transportation. This is particularly true for low-income Mainers, adults seeking to upskill, and high school students in sparsely populated districts. In a state where one in five students lives in a rural area, this issue cannot be ignored.

Better-coordinated community transportation supports:

- **Educational Attainment:** Reliable transportation to adult education centers, community colleges, and training hubs directly impacts the ability of learners to complete credentials and degrees.
- **Digital Skills Development:** Many rural learners must travel to access high-speed internet and digital literacy programs. Without transit options, digital equity remains a promise, not a reality.
- **Career Exploration:** Programs like internships, job shadowing, and work-based learning are vital. Many students simply cannot participate without a ride, widening the opportunity gap.

LD 1451 offers an important step toward making sure Maine's community transportation systems work together more efficiently to serve the people who need them most. Improved coordination will maximize existing resources and allow local systems to address the real needs of students, families, and adult learners.

Educate Maine envisions a Maine where all people can reach their greatest educational and economic potential. A smart, equitable transportation system is not separate from that vision—it is essential to it.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of LD 1451. I urge you to vote in favor of this bill.

Respectfully,

Angela Oechsle  
Educate Maine