



Maine Association of  
Area Agencies on Aging  
P.O. Box 5415  
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WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF NANCY KELLEHER, BOARD PRESIDENT  
MAINE ASSOCIATION OF AREA AGENCIES ON AGING

Submitted May 3, 2013

Senator Mazurek, Representative Theriault and members of the Joint Standing Committees on Transportation:

My name is Nancy Kelleher and I am the Board President of the Maine Association of Area Agencies on Aging. The Association represents Maine's five Area Agencies on Aging and provides a unifying voice on issues that promote independence, dignity and economic self-reliance for Maine's seniors.

We strongly support LD 1365, An Act to Promote New Models of Mobility and Access to Transportation.

As you know, Maine is the oldest state in the country by median age. Maine is also the most rural state. There are more than 300,000 people in Maine over the age of 60 and more than half of those are over 70 years of age! 65,000 Mainers over the age of 65 live alone.

While Maine is blessed with a relatively healthy and active older population, there comes a time in every older person's life when they begin to worry whether they should continue to drive. Sometimes mobility is a limiting factor, other times it is diminished eyesight but far too often, the problem is memory loss. In fact, 38,000 people in Maine have been diagnosed with some form of dementia and that number is expected to grow to over 53,000 by 2020.

Regardless of how a person comes to understand that they might need to stop driving, the result is the same – a devastating fear of the loss of independence. Because the vast majority of older Mainers rely on driving to get to the store, bank, hairdresser and church, this is not a freedom they give up willingly, particularly since the alternative to driving yourself is relying on someone else to drive you. This bumps up against another strong Maine tradition – self-reliance. In Maine, older adults pride themselves on not asking for help and doing for themselves.

These issues are leading to a perfect storm. People with diminished capacity of all sorts are driving way beyond the time that they should stop because they don't have alternative ways of getting around. They are apprehensive about talking with their physicians about health problems or negative drug effects because they don't want to lose their licenses. Doctors are loath to report people to the Secretary of State because there are very few alternative forms of

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transportation available when people lose their licenses. When people do stop driving, they become reliant on neighbors and friends for transportation, making them vulnerable to abuse and neglect by some who have no problem taking advantage of people in need. Family caregivers, who are often part of our vital workforce, need to take time away from work to drive parents to medical appointments that cannot be scheduled outside of work hours.

While Maine's Area Agencies on Aging used to receive both federal and state funding to provide transportation to seniors, these funds have been almost completely eliminated. What limited funds we do receive are passed on to support Maine's existing transportation system because the funds are insufficient to support any sort of consistent independent service.

This perfect storm may result in injuries and death if we don't take meaningfully action to increase modes of transportation across the state. We recognize that we can't solve Maine's transportation problem overnight, but we believe there are pressing safety and public policy reasons to prioritize finding and implementing real solutions. LD 1365 takes a critical first step in this direction. We are particularly pleased that the bill promotes public private partnerships, focuses attention on connecting community resources and volunteers to serve seniors, and includes a voice for elder advocates on the newly established Maine Public Transit Advisory Council. We stand ready as partners to advance the important work of this legislation and urge you to support it.

Thank you.