

Abdiqani Ibrahim Abdi

Testimony in opposition to the elimination of state-funded SSI and Food Supplement Programs and the elimination of General Assistance

February 22, 2017

Good Morning Senators and Representatives. My name is Abdiqani Ibrahim Abdi and I live in Lewiston. I am testifying in opposition to the proposals to cut SSI, food stamps and General Assistance for immigrants.

I am originally from Somalia and came to the United States in 2005 after I won the Diversity Immigrant Visa Lottery. I am now a U.S. citizen and live here with my two young children and my wife, who is pregnant with our third child.

In 2013, I was able to help my mother immigrate to America. Knowingly, that I would need to support her until my father was able to join her, which he later did. They both moved into their own apartment and my father started working to support them. None of us ever expected to need any assistance from the government.

On July, 2016 my mother had a rotator cuff surgery, but, something unexpectedly happened. She has complications after the surgery and, never recover from it, she was diagnosed Anoxic Brain Damage and become bed ridden/bedbound patient and my father had to leave his job to take care of her full time.

During this time we went through some tough times and challenges, i.e. shortage of income, unemployed, and without health insurance.

After my mother was stabilized and was time to discharge, we have to rent hospital bed, hoist lift, wheel chairs, and be responsible of paying all of her medication, diapers, food and so on.

I learned from Maine Equal Justice Partners about the SSI program and food stamp program available to some immigrants like my parents. I don't know what we would do without them. SSI allows my parents to pay for their rent and utility bills, while the food stamps help them buy food. I help pay for most of their medical expenses, but they also get some help to pay for a small portion of my mother's medications from General Assistance.

My parents do not qualify for Maine Care or Social Security disability because of their immigration status (green card holders), I help as much as I can with money, but cannot possibly afford to cover all of their expenses. I work three jobs to support my own family and to help my parents as much as I can. I work a full-time job during the day, a part-time job in the evenings, and I drive for Uber on the weekends.

I hope my mother will get better and won't have to ask for any more help in the future but for now, my family would be lost without it. Before making the decision to cut these programs, please consider how this will affect people. My family is one example. I took the day off today

so I can share that example with you. I never imagined that I would ever do something like this, but that is how important this is to my family. Thank you for the opportunity.