

Nadi Kaonga  
Portland  
LD 199

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services: my name is Dr Nadi Nina Kaonga, I live in Portland, Maine and I am testifying in favor of LD 199. I am a physician and I am an immigrant. As we know, health is a human right, and in the United States, our health system puts individuals without insurance at-risk and at great disadvantage. One such population are refugees/asylum seekers, also referred to as “New Mainers.” Since health is a human right, we absolutely need to extend health insurance coverage to all New Mainers so they can readily access health services. As an obstetrician and gynecologist in Maine, I frequently encounter situations where patients are not eligible for MaineCare, or in the case of postpartum women, their MaineCare coverage eventually expires, and as such, they then have to make difficult decisions when it comes to their health versus livelihood for themselves and their families. Too frequently, I have patients deciding between medications or food, transportation and childcare because they do not have health insurance to cover the cost of their medications. I also have patients who request deferring preventive health measures and/or treatment due to an inability to afford their care. No one should ever have to make those difficult decisions, especially if we have the capacity to expand health insurance coverage to all. Furthermore, we know that people with health insurance coverage are more likely to seek out and obtain preventive health services and are more likely to be retained in care. Ultimately, health outcomes are improved with health insurance outcomes. Therefore, Maine can and should set an example to the rest of the United States and expand MaineCare coverage to all regardless of immigration status. Let’s uphold health as a human right, let’s keep our community – all of the people who comprise our community – as healthy as possible. This can be achieved by approving LD199. Thank you for your time and consideration. –Dr Nadi