

**Testimony for the 131st Session of the Maine State Legislature**

**Joint Committee on Health and Human Services**

**Public Hearing March 28, 2013**

**LD 199: An Act to Improve the Health of Maine Residents by Removing Exclusions to the MaineCare Program**

***Ought to Pass***

Chairpersons Senator Joseph Baldacci and Representative Michele Meyer and Members of the Committee, my name is Suzanne Rudalevige and I am retired and living in Cape Elizabeth .I urge you to vote in favor of this bill.

I believe that over the last several years most people in Maine have come to realize that we critically need an influx of workers in our state and that immigrants from overseas are filling that gap for us. It is therefore in our self interest to treat them well so that they remain living and working in Maine. It also saves money since without a healthcare program, people end up the vastly more expensive ER for what might have been treated by an office visit in a timely manner.

From my Christian based view, it is also proper to make sure that everyone regardless of status has access to healthcare when they are not able financially to afford other insurance.

Our immigrants cannot be held responsible for a lack of status when the federal immigration system on which they rely for obtaining that status is so unresponsive as to be fairly described as broken. I have worked with many immigrants and know that many have been here 10 years and more and still await an immigration ruling. Meanwhile they are working in all sectors of employment and paying taxes and going to school. With housing the price it is, having a job does not translate into being able to afford health insurance as well. (They are also having to pay for their work permits... rather outrageous!)

I very much hope that you will vote to remove the exclusions to the MaineCare program so that ALL can have health coverage in Maine.

Thank you.