

Testimony of Melissa Hackett
Policy Associate, Maine Children's Alliance
In support of LD 199, An Act to Improve the Health of Maine Residents by Removing Exclusions
to the MaineCare Program
March 28, 2023

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and members of the Committee on Health and Human Services. My name is Melissa Hackett and I am a policy associate with the Maine Children's Alliance. We are a statewide non-partisan, non-profit research and advocacy organization whose mission is to promote sound public policies to improve the lives of Maine children, youth, and families.

I offer testimony on behalf of the Maine Children's Alliance in support of LD 199, which will restore access to health insurance for Maine residents who have had their eligibility restricted due to immigration status. We all benefit and are healthier when everyone has access to the health care they need, when they need it.

As advocates for children, we can tell you that covering parents is one of the most important things you can do to ensure a successful future for children, and to strengthen families and our communities. Too often when parents lose health insurance coverage, their children do, too.ⁱ

In 2012, the Maine Children's Alliance released a report on how children fared following the rollback of MaineCare.ⁱⁱ In sum, 28,500 working Maine parents were cut from the program. While these cuts were directed at adults, our analysis shows that some children lost coverage too, even though their eligibility had not changed. Even now, there are 17,000 children in Maine who live with a parent who does not have health insurance coverage,ⁱⁱⁱ and around 6,600 children who are eligible, but unenrolled, in MaineCare.^{iv}

Policies such as this one to close gaps in coverage to MaineCare improve the well-being of families and will also help address racial disparities in health outcomes for Maine families. Access to equitable care is critical to getting every child off to a healthy start, and that starts with the health of a parent before a child is born. The 2021 Maine KIDS COUNT Data Book notes racial disparities in areas of maternal and child health, including data by race of women who received prenatal care. In 2019, Black women in Maine were less likely to benefit from prenatal

care in the first trimester: 75 percent of Black women compared to 91 percent of white women received this important maternal health care.^v

Maine's immigrants are part of our families, schools, and communities, and valuable contributors to our economy. It does not make sense that they should be denied access to MaineCare that ensures these families have the same opportunities for health and well-being.

We must recognize the very important role that health insurance coverage plays in keeping all Maine children and their families healthy. As child advocates, the Maine Children's Alliances urges you to close this gap in health care coverage by supporting LD 199. Thank you for your consideration.

ⁱ <https://www.cbpp.org/research/collateral-damage-children-can-lose-coverage-when-their-parents-lose-health-insurance>

ⁱⁱ <https://communitycatalyst.org/posts/to-keep-children-healthy-maine-must-ensure-parents-have-health-coverage/#:~:text=It%20is%20tested%20and%20true%E2%80%94children%20are%20more%20likely,be%20significant%2C%20particularly%20for%20those%20parents%20without%20insurance.>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/6547-children-who-have-a-parent-with-no-health-insurance?loc=21&loct=2#detailed/2/21/false/2048,1729,37,871,870,573,869,133,38/any/13533,13532>

^{iv} <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/8438-low-income-children-under-age-19-without-health-insurance?loc=21&loct=2#detailed/2/any/false/574,1729,37,871,870,573,869,36,868,867/any/17060,17061>

^v https://mainechildrensalliance.org/site/assets/files/1825/2021_kidscount_db_final.pdf page 7