

Michée Kikobo
Greene
LD 199

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services: my name is Michée Kikobo, I live in Greene Maine and I am writing this to testify in favor of LD 199.

As an immigrant, I love to play soccer. It's a great way to connect with other people who share my background and culture. But every time I go to play fun pick-up games with my fellow immigrants, there's a constant fear that runs among us. It's the fear of getting hurt and ending up with medical bills that we can't afford. It's the fear of being penalized at work and not being able to support ourselves and our loved ones.

This fear is always there, lurking in the background. Even though it often comes in the form of a friendly joke before and during the game, it's very real. And it's something that everyone fears. It haunts us on the pitch, and it's a constant reminder of our vulnerability.

As an immigrant with access to Mainecare, I feel guilty for being privileged. I keep asking myself why I deserve to have access to healthcare and not others. Even though we all have the same background and are simply equal, I feel like I'm not one of them. It's hard to enjoy playing soccer when I know that some of my friends might end up with medical bills they cannot pay.

I'll never forget the day when a friend of mine was slightly hurt during physical contact while playing and went down on the ground for a few minutes. As he was going down in pain, someone shouted a joke that made everyone laugh. "Bobanga Te, Ye aza Naye dans le Bon." The sentence translates to "Don't worry, he is good, he's all set. In this context, the joke meant that my friend had a good immigrant status, and the federal government would cover his bill if things went south. While everyone laughed at the joke, I was saddened by it. It's unfortunate that a place that was designed for people to have fun while exercising became a place of fear where individuals fear the worst.

I have never felt so distant from my fellow immigrants' brothers, and what bothers me the most is that it is over something that should not even be a privilege in the first place. Health should not be a privilege; it needs to be a basic human right at least here in Maine. It feels like we are all in one biological family, but only certain kids in the family get medical attention, and the rest are left to their own fate.

Passing this law would mean that our friends, family, and neighbors who are immigrants can visit a doctor or fill a prescription when they're sick, without having to worry about the cost or being penalized for seeking medical attention.

Thank you.