

MaineCare Testimony
Juana Rodriguez Vazquez
Executive Director, Mano en Mano

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services: my name is Juana Rodriguez Vazquez, I live in Milbridge, Maine and I am here today to testify in favor of LD 199.

I came to Maine when I was 9 years old with my family. Since I can remember, my family worked as seasonal migrant workers, following the harvest across the United States, starting our year in Florida, and ending the one year in Maine.

My family chose to plant roots in Milbridge Maine, and I have lived here ever since. I now live with my husband and two children, and am happy to call Maine home.

In my current role as Executive Director of Mano en Mano, I work to support migrant seasonal workers and immigrants to thrive in Maine. This bill represents an opportunity to greatly improve the lives of members of my community.

At Mano en Mano we support thousands of seasonal migrant workers and their families over the blueberry, potato, broccoli, apple and wreath seasons. We serve families, just like mine, that follow the harvest and put food on grocery store shelves, tables, and plates of folks across the country.

Migrant workers face a unique set of barriers in our state, and among them is a challenge in accessing healthcare. Often, when we support folks with a healthcare need, we bear witness to conversations where difficult questions are asked, and decisions are made:

- Will we be able to buy enough food if we go to the doctors?
- Should I check my eyesight, or be able to send money to my family?
- Where can I go if there is an emergency, and can I afford it?

Folks that do not qualify for MaineCare based on their status, are treated as if they do not exist. They are denied personhood, and dignity. They are left to fend for themselves, forgotten and unseen.

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Migrant farmworkers are an essential part of what makes our economy strong, and communities vibrant- yet they are not afforded the basic right to healthcare. This is a problem for obvious reasons; it is a matter of survival. It is also significant, too, for our state as a whole, because it prevents us from realizing our shared prosperity and humanity.

Passing LD 199 would mean that:

- Families won't have to choose between accessing medical care, and buying food*
- People in an emergency situation, don't have to decide whether or not they can afford life saving services*
- Immigration status won't be a barrier for folks needing medical care*

Importantly, passing this bill would help migrant seasonal workers and families to feel more welcome, and thrive in Maine.