

Gwendolyn Forrest  
Portland  
LD 199

Good afternoon, Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services. My name is Gwendolyn Forrest, I live in Portland, and I am here today to testify in favor of LD 199.

Taking care of each other is what gets us through hard times. But right now, many people in our community – including asylum seekers, green card holders, and others with temporary protected status – do not have access to the care they need, despite all they contribute to Maine, including taxes. LD 199 can help change that by making sure that MaineCare covers everyone with low-income.

My father, who lives out of state, has fronto-temporal dementia and is currently being cared for by several home health care workers who are from Ghana. They are very skilled, deeply loving, and absolutely essential to my father's care. Though each of them has access to health care, many people who they are in community with do not, including those seeking asylum. In a recent conversation with one of my father's caregivers, she described how people she knows who are seeking asylum attempt to self-medicate to get through health issues, and the risks they are forced to take in doing so. If everyone had access to health care regardless of immigration status, this would not be the case.

Our wellbeing is linked. It is in all of our best interest to care for each other, and we need a health care system that works for everyone. Your vote in favor of LD 199 will help make this a reality. Thank you for your attention and your time today.