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United Way
of Southern Maine



Good afternoon Chair Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and Members of the Committee on Health and Human Services.

My name is Devon Stockmayer, and I am the Advocacy Supervisor at Preble Street in Portland. I am here today to ask for your support in the passage of LD199: An Act to Improve the Health of Maine Residents by Removing Exclusions to the MaineCare Program.

There is a sign that hangs above my office desk which reads, “Healthcare is a human right.” This feels so intuitive to me, and yet it is not our reality. The current parameters of the MaineCare program exclude the majority of folks in our immigrant community, including some of the most vulnerable subgroups such as the elderly and immunocompromised. Denying people health insurance coverage because of their immigration status sends a message that we do not value all parts of the community equally. Individuals deemed indefinitely ineligible are made to confront mountains of medical expenses. Paying a hospital bill could mean shutting off the heat in the dead of winter, or drastically reducing one’s food budget and intake to make ends meet. These are choices that should never have to be made — choices that sow stress and *worsen* health.

At Preble Street, particularly in our Teen Services, Community Case Management, and Street Outreach programs, we work with many folks in the immigrant population who experience exclusion from MaineCare. Adjusting to a new country can be an overwhelming and at times terrifying ordeal, especially if you are without essential protections like basic healthcare access. One former Preble Street client, originally from Honduras, came to Portland after a long journey of fleeing his home



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Equitable access to healthcare should not be a question that needs to be debated before the legislature, but an inherent right for all who reside in Maine, and in this country. In that light, I ask that you support the passage of LD199, because this bill is an opportunity to show that Maine cares for *all* of its residents.



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homelessness and hunger

