

Testimony to support LD 199

My name is Leopold Ndayisabye, I am married, I have 4 children, and I live in Scarborough. I came to Maine as Asylum seeker in May 2011, and I was blessed to get asylum approved after 6 months. I came to this country with my bachelor's degree in social work and earned my Master's degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling in 2016. I worked at Preble Street Resource Center as a Case Manager for seven years before I opened my own business in 2019. I currently run an agency that provides home support services (Group homes) for adults with intellectual disabilities. We have 70 employees on our payroll and the majority are asylum seekers.

Although most of them work two jobs, their capacities to pay their healthcare bills in addition to other living costs are too low. We all know the current problem related to the living cost (housing, food, utilities and healthcare etc.), especially in Maine. Despite their immigrant status, the immigrant population have made a remarkable impact on the social and economy sectors in Maine. I strongly believe that, extending MaineCare benefits to all people who lack resources, without any exclusion related to the immigrant status, will not only improve health of Maine residents but, it will also be a booster for Maine's economy because every single dollar spent will go to the healthcare institutions (hospitals, laboratories, drug stores etc.).

Today I am so proud to be a: US citizen, Mainer, business owner and taxpayer. This wouldn't happen if I was not able to be sheltered, given food and healthcare upon arrival in Maine. I am an example of the contributions immigrants make to our behavioral health sector. Therefore, fellows who are in need of healthcare today represent who I was upon arrival and the person I am today represents who those people will be tomorrow. Please help to get this bill passed.

Thank you.