



April 26, 2023

Please accept this testimony in **support** of LD 199 – An Act to Improve the Health of Maine Residents by Removing Exclusions to the MaineCare Program on behalf of **EQUALITYMAINE**, GLBTQ Advocates and Defenders, Maine TransNet, OUTMAINE, and the Maine Women’s Lobby.

We believe that all Maine people, no matter where they come from, should have access to affordable healthcare and should be able to see a doctor when needed. Exclusions based on immigration status are unfair and short-sighted, and they harm our community health.

Without health coverage, many low-income immigrants must wait until a condition becomes an emergency to get care, further endangering their health and putting added stress on our overburdened emergency departments. Children’s access to health care improves when their parents have health coverage. Children’s physical, mental, and emotional health are impacted by the wellbeing of their caretakers – whole families need care to thrive.

The LGBTQ+ Public Policy Coalition advocates for policy changes to ensure all people receive the care and coverage they need. We are aware LGBTQ immigrant individuals face multiple barriers to health care access and coverage due to intersectional discrimination. As immigrants, they face discrimination when trying to access health care and are simultaneously alienated in health care settings and their own communities for identifying as LGBTQ.

According to the [National Health Law Program](#), many individuals and families [migrate to the United States because](#) their home countries are unsafe due to war or persecution, lack of economic opportunity, or environmental factors like natural disasters that cause displacement. LGBTQ immigrants often experience additional violence and discrimination in their home countries and are survivors of sexual violence, torture, or persecution by their families as children because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Many LGBTQ immigrants leave their countries to escape this violence, and when they arrive in the U.S., they often [experience compounded stress and trauma](#) due to their [intersectional identities](#) as immigrants and members of the LGBTQ community.

The National Center for Transgender Equality reports transgender immigrant adults face additional barriers to health care even compared to their LGBQ counterparts. Transgender people are even more likely than their LGBQ counterparts to have experienced violence and persecution in their home countries; as a result, transgender individuals [disproportionately represent LGBTQ asylum-seekers](#) in the U.S.

LD 199 continues Maine’s work of improving access to health care that started with Medicaid expansion, making our healthcare system more equitable and our workforce more resilient. Immigrants, including LGBTQ+ people, are essential parts of Maine’s communities and our future. It’s time we honor their human right to health care and pass this bill.