



276 Liston Street, Suite #280
Lewiston, ME 04240
(207) 241-0546
info@nmphi.org
<https://nmphi.org/>

**Statement of Jelsa Capita
New Mainers Public Health Initiative
To the Joint Standing Committee On Health and Human Services**

Speaking in support of: LD 1955, An Act to Require Hospitals and Hospital-affiliated Providers to Provide Financial Assistance for Medical Care

January 17th, 2024

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Jelsa Capita. I live in Auburn, Maine. I'm providing this testimony in support of LD 1955, "An Act to Require Hospitals and Hospital-affiliated Providers to Provide Financial Assistance for Medical Care."

I am a Community Health Worker at New Mainers Public Health Initiative, which serves as the leading health related, community-based organization directly serving the needs of the immigrant and refugee youth and their families in Maine.

As a community health worker, I have worked with people who have received unexpected medical bills even though they qualified for free care. For example, I worked with one client who was not informed at the hospital that the specific lab service she needed was not covered by free care. Although she informed the hospital that she was covered only by free care, she left under the impression that her lab services had been covered and she would not be receiving any bills for her visit that day. However, a little while later, she was sent a bill for this service that she could not afford to pay. It is very difficult for community members to use free care when there is a lack of clarity as to what services are or are not included in the program. LD 1955 would increase the transparency of the free care program by requiring hospitals inform patients if certain services are not covered. This would greatly help communities in accessing the care they need without confusion or resulting medical debt.

I urge you to support LD 1955. Thank you very much for your time.