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Statement of Souad Ali
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 Souad Ali. I live in Lewiston, 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.

My biggest fear is getting sick and not being able to afford the health care I need. I can't imagine not being able to support my children and my mother because of a health condition. I have applied for free care but was denied due to my income as a single mom with two kids. In the past, I've gotten sick and gone to the emergency room because it is my only option. This visit resulted in a \$2,500 bill. I live in extreme fear and stress about paying this amount. As a Community Health Worker, I work with a client who has multiple diseases and doesn't have any health care coverage. Every time that she gets sick, she goes to the emergency room and ends up with bills she is unable to pay. We see this often in immigrant communities who often do not have access to routine, necessary, and preventative care.

LD 1955, by increasing the income limits for eligibility to 200% for free care, would ensure more people are able to access preventative, medically necessary care – without having to go to the emergency room and without receiving bills that many are unable to pay that can often lead to medical debt.

For these reasons I urge the committee to pass LD 1955. Thank you for your time.