

**Testimony of the Maine Immigrants Rights Coalition (MIRC) in Support of LD 105**  
**Sponsor: Representative Kristi Mathieson of Kittery**  
**Public Hearing: Wednesday, February 5th, 2025, at 10:00 AM**

**Presented to the Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services**  
Senator Bailey, Representative Mathieson, and esteemed members of the Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance, and Financial Services.

My name is Ruben Torres, and I serve as the Advocacy Manager for the Maine Immigrants' Rights Coalition (MIRC). I am here today on behalf of our coalition of over 110 member organizations in support of LD 105 "An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Commission Regarding Foreign-trained Physicians Living in Maine to Establish a Sponsorship Program for Internationally Trained Physicians".

Maine has a severe healthcare workforce shortage, with over 80% of our counties designated as Health Professional Shortage Areas. Patients in rural areas face months-long wait times, while hospitals and clinics struggle to fill critical positions. At the same time, highly skilled, foreign-trained physicians are already living in Maine but are unable to practice due to systemic barriers to licensure. LD 105 is a step toward solving this crisis by creating a sponsorship program that helps internationally trained physicians complete the necessary training and testing to obtain full licensure in Maine. Through a grant fund administered by the Finance Authority of Maine, this legislation would support 10 physicians in overcoming licensing barriers

Increasing the number of qualified physicians is critical to ensuring timely and accessible care for all Mainers. Immigrants already play a vital role in Maine's healthcare system. From 2015 to 2019, 15.9% of the state's physicians and surgeons and 4.5% of registered nurses, nurse practitioners, and licensed practical nurses were foreign-born. The demand for bilingual and culturally competent healthcare professionals continues to rise—between 2018 and 2022, job postings requiring bilingual skills in Maine increased by 180%. Internationally trained physicians are uniquely positioned to meet this need, bringing essential language skills and diverse cultural perspectives that enhance patient care. By improving access to preventative healthcare, they also help reduce long-term medical costs and strengthen public health across the state.

In conclusion, LD 105 is a practical foundation that aims to strengthen Maine's healthcare system by investing in the professionals already living here. This legislation has the potential to address provider shortages, expand healthcare access, and improve patient outcomes across the state. We urge you to support LD 105 and help ensure that Maine can make the most of the valuable talent and expertise of foreign-trained physicians living in our state.

Thank you for your attention to this issue.

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### Work Cited

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- Rural Health Info *Health Professional Shortage Areas: Primary Care, by County, October 2024 - Maine* <https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/charts/5?state=ME>
- Stanford FC. *The Importance of Diversity and Inclusion in the Healthcare Workforce*. J Natl Med Assoc. 2020 Jun;112(3):247-249. doi: 10.1016/j.jnma.2020.03.014. Epub 2020 Apr 23. PMID: 32336480; PMCID: PMC7387183.