



Maine People's Alliance

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee and Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Cate Blackford. I serve as the public policy director for Maine People's Alliance. I am here to testify neither for nor against LD 210. My testimony addresses the portions of the biennial budget pertaining to health care.

Maine People's Alliance is the largest community organization in Maine and one of the largest in the country. We work with Mainers from here and away, as the single community that we are, to ensure everyone has what they need and gives what they can and no one is left behind.

A large part of our work is devoted to making sure that *all* Mainers have access to health care. Most of us believe that regardless of who we are, where we're from or how much money we have in the bank, we should all be able to get the care we need when we're sick. That's why Maine voted as a state to expand Medicaid back in 2017.

But that ability was snatched away from many Mainers from other countries during the LePage era, as part of the then-governor's campaign against immigrants. We have been working to right this wrong over the last few years, and every person who has been once again able to get health care coverage is a victory.

In spite of the hateful rhetoric we're hearing every day against immigrants, we are all members of the same communities and we are all Mainers. Do we want to be a state where we can't all get the care we need? That doesn't seem like us. We're the state that has seen some great progress towards getting healthier, as we've dramatically reduced our uninsured rate, and more people than ever are getting the check-ups, medications, and interventions they need to stay healthy, care for their families, and engage in our workforce. This bill would continue building on that important work.

LR 196 would allow more Mainers excluded from coverage due to their immigration status to access the necessary prescription drugs and life-saving medical care they need, and this committee should unreservedly support it by including funding for the bill in the biennial budget.

Thank you.