

## **Testimony of Maine Immigrant Rights' Coalition in Support of LD 865 –**

**An Act to Require MaineCare to Reimburse for Lactation Services in the Homes of Eligible Persons**

**Sponsor: Representative Boyer**

**Public Hearing: March 18th, 2025 1:00 PM**

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and Members of the Committee on Health and Human Services,

We, on behalf of the Maine Immigrants' Rights Coalition and In Her Presence, are writing to express our support for LD 865, "An Act to Require MaineCare to Reimburse for Lactation Services in the Homes of Eligible Persons".

Many new families require clinical lactation support after bringing their newborns home. However, access to professional lactation care remains unequal for families with Medicaid coverage. Private practice International Board Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLCs) often decline to serve Medicaid patients due to insufficient reimbursement rates. This reimbursement gap also limits the IBCLC workforce, as practitioners struggle to maintain financially viable practices. While the support and education provided by WIC peer counselors are valuable, language barriers, lack of awareness about eligibility, bureaucratic hurdles, and immigration status concerns pose significant challenges.

In Her Presence works with new mothers who often bring rich breastfeeding traditions but lack the systemic support needed to overcome challenges like latch issues, milk supply concerns, and workplace accommodations that are essential in postpartum care. These obstacles may include transportation limitations, language barriers, and the challenges of adjusting to life in Maine with limited social support. The lactation services reimbursement would alleviate some of the financial burdens on new mothers, enabling them to focus on becoming educated parents without the added stress of incurring costs related to lactation. This support is crucial for successful breastfeeding, which, in turn, promotes healthier babies, reduces long-term healthcare expenses, and strengthens maternal-child bonds.

Research has shown that breastfeeding can be extremely beneficial for both mother and child. When mothers have access to lactation counseling, breastfeeding rates increase, leading to lower healthcare costs for both families and the MaineCare system. Additionally, allowing certified lactation consultants to be reimbursed for home visits ensures that expertise is accessible equitably across urban and rural areas, reducing disparities in maternal health outcomes. By passing LD 865, the Legislature is investing in a cost-effective and preventative healthcare measure that empowers mothers and strengthens families.

We urge this committee to vote in favor of LD 865 and support the implementation of MaineCare reimbursement for lactation services. We appreciate your time and consideration.

Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

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### Work Cited

Wouk, K., Chetwynd, E., Vitaglione, T., & Sullivan, C. (2017). Improving Access to Medical Lactation Support and Counseling: Building the Case for Medicaid Reimbursement.

*Maternal and child health journal*, 21(4), 836–844.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10995-016-2175-x>

- Equity in access to lactation support and counseling is important for reducing disparities in breastfeeding rates; however, low-income mothers in states without Medicaid expansion lack coverage for these lactation services.

World Health Organization. Infant and young child feeding. Published June 9, 2021.

Accessed 14 Mar 2025.

<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/infant-and-young-child-feeding>