

Testimony of the Maine Immigrants' Rights Coalition (MIRC) In Opposition to LD 1707

An Act to Require a Person to Be a United States Citizen to Receive State or Local Financial Assistance and to Ensure Municipal Compliance with Federal Immigration Laws
Public Hearing: May 2nd, 2025, 11:00 AM

Good morning, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and members of the Health and Human Services Committee. My name is Ruben Torres, and I am the Advocacy, Communications, and Policy Manager for the Maine Immigrants' Rights Coalition (MIRC). MIRC represents over 100 organizations across the state, working to improve the economic and social standing of immigrants in Maine. We actively prioritize the voices, perspectives, and decision-making of New Mainer communities as we acknowledge the status quo of systems that consistently disadvantage them. MIRC envisions policies that will not exacerbate inequities across BIPOC groups, including divisions across the country of origin, socioeconomic status, state geography, language, and immigration status. **I am writing today representing our coalition in opposition to LD 1707.**

Maine immigrants are a vital part of our families, communities, schools, and workplaces. Many key industries in our state, from health care, agriculture, food production, hospitality, and health care, rely on immigrants to maintain adequate staffing. This committee has often looked at the challenges facing staffing for our direct care agencies, hospitals, and childcare centers. Immigrants are helping fill gaps that we cannot make up without them.

As of 2023, nearly 53,450 immigrants live in Maine, and though they make up only 3.8% of the state's population, immigrant workers account for nearly 5% of the state's labor force, filling critical gaps as older generations retire.¹ In 2023 alone, Maine's immigrant residents paid \$625.8 million in taxes, contributing to the Medicare, Social Security, and other programs that Mainers depend on.² Just because a Mainer isn't a U.S. citizen doesn't mean they are not providing value to Maine, and we should not be restricting them from access to supports for which they are eligible.

LD 1707 would restrict the ability of local and state entities to provide benefits to people who are noncitizens. The Maine Legislature has repeatedly made intentional choices to provide certain local and state benefits with varying immigration statuses. Those policy decisions were made with bipartisan support in different legislative sessions and have been continued by legislatures that followed them. Those programs include MaineCare coverage for children and pregnant people, SNAP and TANF for people experiencing a hardship, and General Assistance. There are also non-citizens who are eligible for federal benefits, including health care coverage, food assistance, TANF, and housing supports. Each of these programs have income, age, household composition, and immigration status requirements. Most also include requirements to participate in school or work. Immigrants who meet these requirements should be able to access the supports they need to meet their basic needs.

In closing, we respectfully ask the committee to focus on building bridges, not walls. Maine's future depends on a growing workforce and vibrant communities, and immigrants

¹

<https://mainemorningstar.com/2025/04/21/mainers-deserve-investment-in-our-health-and-stability-not-family-separation/>

² Ibid

are an essential part of both. For these reasons, we urge the Committee to vote Ought Not to Pass on LD 1707.

Respectfully,

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