

Testimony in Support of LD 2212

An Act Making Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2026 and June 30, 2027

Sponsor: Representative Drew Gattine

Public Hearing: Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Taxation, February 19, 2026

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Taxation:

My name is Ruben Torres, and I serve as the Advocacy and Policy Manager for the Maine Immigrants' Rights Coalition (MIRC). MIRC is a statewide coalition of more than 100 organizations, including immigrant-led groups, legal service providers, and direct service agencies. Together, we work to improve the economic and social standing of Maine's immigrant communities, recognizing that stable immigrant families strengthen Maine's workforce, public health, and local economies. We are here today in support of LD 2212, and we respectfully urge the Legislature to strengthen this supplemental budget so that it provides durable stability rather than temporary relief.

Maine's supplemental budget seeks to address significant federal uncertainty and proposed cuts to health, nutrition, and housing, which could destabilize thousands of residents. While it responsibly funds core systems, immigrant communities and service providers view the budget as relying too much on short-term fixes, lacking the structural fiscal capacity to withstand sustained federal cuts.

Housing stability illustrates this challenge clearly. The supplemental budget continues funding for emergency shelter operations and includes substantial housing investments. These appropriations are necessary and appreciated. Yet immigrant families remain disproportionately represented in emergency shelter and General Assistance caseloads, often due to federal processing delays, barriers to rental markets, and gaps in federal support eligibility. Emergency appropriations sustain the current response system, but they do not meaningfully accelerate transitions into permanent housing or reduce long-term municipal strain. Preventing eviction and expanding stable rental assistance capacity is more fiscally responsible than sustaining prolonged emergency placements.

Health care and food assistance present similar structural concerns. The budget offsets portions of anticipated federal MaineCare funding reductions, which is an important step. However, if federal matching funds decline further or SNAP eligibility is restricted, the state will face a choice between filling those gaps or allowing residents to lose coverage and food security. For immigrant households, including mixed-status families and newly work-authorized individuals, loss of these supports directly undermines workforce participation and economic integration. When residents delay care or rely solely on emergency systems, costs shift rather than disappear. One-time relief payments, while helpful in the short term, cannot substitute for sustained health coverage or nutrition assistance. True affordability requires predictable access to essential services.

The central policy question underlying LD 2212 is whether Maine will align its revenue structure with the scale of the risks it faces. The budget proposes one-time relief payments funded from reserve accounts while continuing permanent tax expenditures that

disproportionately benefit high-income households and large corporations. If Maine can sustain ongoing tax preferences, it can also sustain ongoing investments in housing stabilization, child care, direct care workforce wages, and health care access. The affordability crisis confronting Maine families is not merely about purchasing power; it is about whether the systems that allow people to live and work here are adequately funded year after year.

We agree with our partners in the Mainers for Tax Fairness coalition that Maine must begin raising progressive revenue to build a durable firewall against federal harm. The rainy day fund exists for emergencies, and federal withdrawal from core safety net programs would constitute such an emergency. However, reserves alone are not a long-term solution. Stable revenue from those most able to contribute ensures that Maine does not revisit the same structural gaps each budget cycle while working families shoulder the consequences.

Immigrant families are integral to Maine's workforce and long-term economic growth. Stabilizing them stabilizes employers, schools, hospitals, and municipalities. Investments in housing security, health care access, nutrition assistance, and legal navigation are not discrete immigrant issues; they are core components of statewide economic resilience. A supplemental budget that pairs necessary emergency appropriations with progressive, sustainable revenue reform will better position Maine to withstand federal volatility and protect all residents.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge the Committees to strengthen LD 2212 by prioritizing durable investments and aligning revenue policy with Maine's long-term fiscal needs.

Thank you for your time and consideration.