



To: The Honorable Senator Claxton, Chair
The Honorable Representative Meyer, Chair
Members, Committee on Health and Human Services

From: Mikenzie Dwyer, Intern with Maine Medical Association and University of New England Senior

Date: 21 April 2021

Re: **In Support**
LD 718, An Act To Improve the Health of Maine Residents by Closing Coverage Gaps in the MaineCare Program and the Children's Health Insurance Program

The Maine Medical Association is the State's largest professional physician organization representing more than 4,300 physicians, residents, and medical students in Maine whose mission is to support Maine physicians, advance the quality of medicine in Maine and promote the health of all Maine residents.

The Maine Medical Association **supports** LD 718, An Act To Improve the Health of Maine Residents by Closing Coverage Gaps in the MaineCare Program and the Children's Health Insurance Program. Racial inequalities in healthcare have been a focus of MMA since the events that occurred over last summer. We continue to convene regularly on this issue. In the interest of time, we were unable to provide oral testimony for this important bill but would like to add our input and touch on some key pieces.

This bill would provide crucial access to medical coverage for Maine residents who are not eligible for Medicaid. This is especially important during the current COVID-19 pandemic. Maine has some of the lowest COVID-19 infection rates in the country but one of the largest racial disparities. Black communities are contracting COVID-19 at a rate 20 times that of white

residents¹. Alongside the racial disparity, immigrants have been gravely impacted by the pandemic. USCIS suspended all in-person services at its offices for the first three months of the pandemic; interviews for all immigration benefit applications and asylum applications were postponed² as a result. This postponement meant healthcare coverage was also postponed as people were waiting for their immigrant status to be approved. Four percent of Maine residents are immigrants and 7 percent of residents are native-born U.S. citizens with at least one immigrant parent. These residents are important to Maine. This was made clear during the public hearing for this bill.

The Maine Medical Association urges the committee to pass this crucial bill. MMA has fought and will continue to fight for the health of Black and minority residents in Maine.

We appreciate your time and dedication on this bill. Please reach out if we can be of use during the work session.

Sincerely,

Mikenzie Dwyer

¹ Miller, Kevin. (June 21, 2020) Maine has nation's worst COVID-19 racial disparity. *Portland Press Herald*. <https://www.pressherald.com/2020/06/21/maine-has-nations-worst-covid-19-racial-disparity/#>

² Loweree, Jorge. Melnich-Riechlin, Aaron. Ewing, Walter. (Sept. 30, 2020). The Impact of COVID-19 on Noncitizens and Across the U.S. Immigration System. *America Immigration Council*. <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/impact-covid-19-us-immigration-system>