



Maine Unitarian Universalist State Advocacy Network

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Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and distinguished members of the Committee on Health and Human Services:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of LD 199. My name is Sandra Barth and I live in Newcastle. I submit this testimony on behalf of the Maine Unitarian Universalist State Advocacy Network (known as MUUSAN), which connects the 26 UU congregations of Maine in social justice organizing and advocacy.

MUUSAN supports LD 199 from a faith tradition that affirms the inherent worth and dignity of every person and seeks justice, equity, and compassion in human relations. There is no justice, equity, or compassion in a healthcare system set up to help people without insurance or the means to pay for it, which then specifically excludes certain residents of our state for no reason other than their immigration status.

Excluding a category of immigrants—particularly one that provides so many of Maine's home health care assistants, nursing home staff and other healthcare providers, is the epitome of "penny-wise, pound-foolish". I am a retired registered nurse and a retired Certified Diabetes Educator. In my nursing and diabetes education experience, I have seen, again and again, the value of access to and coverage of adequate medical care in preventing the worsening of medical conditions and therefore avoiding future costs of inadequate medical management. While the current system gives the appearance of saving the State money by denying access and coverage to adult non-pregnant immigrants, this "pushes the can down the road" by making preventive care impossible and leaving urgent medical needs to be dealt with through emergency care or a hospital free care policy that might cover the needed treatment. It is in all our best interests to keep these New Mainers as healthy as possible while they work through the necessary process of seeking a more permanent immigration status and hopefully future citizenship.

Moreover, excluding otherwise eligible adults from Maine Care simply based on immigration status extracts far too high a moral cost. In almost all our faith traditions, we are directed to welcome the stranger. Following that direction entails more than simply opening the door and saying, "Fend for yourself until you and your family have been here long enough to earn the same level of concern, consideration and human dignity we accord to those not burdened by your immigration status." LD 199 would have us say "Not only are you welcome, but we care that you remain healthy enough to survive and thrive as you make your home here with us".

Maine is already more welcoming to immigrants than many other parts of the country, and we should be proud of that fact and what it says about the character of our population. This bill adds a much-needed postscript to Maine's welcome message.

MUUSAN urges the members of this Committee to vote Ought to Pass on LD 199.