

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services: my name is Amy Leonard, I live in Falmouth, Maine. I am here today to testify in favor of LD 199.

I work as an elementary social worker in Portland Maine. I had the pleasure of working with a wonderful family who immigrated from Africa. The family consisted of a Father and 2 very young children who attended my school. The father was focused on two things: work to support his family and caring for his children. The father had so much hope about life despite the hardships of moving to a new country. His children were his priority. If his children forgot something for school he would follow the bus on his bike to get an item to them. Once he did this in the pouring rain. Throughout this time he kept asking me if there was a way that he could work to support his family.

Unfortunately he disclosed to my Social Work Intern that something was growing in his stomach. He was confused and overwhelmed. With his permission, I was able to track down his Doctor and found out that he had liver cancer. The doctor and his support staff were concerned that he was missing appointments and as a result, the cancer would progress and perhaps become untreatable. We learned after that the father was terrified that he was unable to pay his bills. I was able to help him navigate free care which covered a percentage of his bills but there were treatments that were not covered that he needed.

Ultimately, we lost this amazing man and father. The children are now in a new country without parents. The doctors believe that if he were treated earlier, he could have survived.

Had he been connected to MaineCare, this father would have been able to detect and treat his cancer in time and still be with us today. Please, the stakes are so high, this is life and death. All people deserve the dignity of care. We can do this here in Maine. Please pass LD 199.