

Christina Cataldo
Sidney

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services: my name is Christina Cataldo, I live in Sidney and I am here today to testify in favor of LD 718.

As a Christian pastor and tax payer in Maine, I can think of few ways to better invest tax funds than to restore access to Mainecare for immigrants to our state. I, personally, as a young adult, had medical debt that would have been impossible for me to pay off had I not received charitable support from the hospital system that had cared for me. I also know that not everyone is lucky enough to receive that kind of help. I also come from a family that carried unmanageable and unaffordable amounts of medical debt. I do not wish that on anyone, particularly those who are newer arrivals to our state, working to establish themselves as members of the community. My church here in Maine has given financial support to a local family, who are immigrants, to help cover gas and parking for trips to the hospital when one of them had to travel for healthcare, because we know that healthcare costs are so expensive and we wanted them to not have to struggle so much for money when they were also worried about the health of someone they loved.

Especially this year, when so many of the essential businesses that have made it possible for us to survive the pandemic are staffed by immigrants, it seems only right and fair to support this group of essential workers who often fall through the gap in medical care. The restoration of access to Mainecare will literally save lives and livelihoods of people who are the backbone of vital industries in our state. Jesus once said that nations that offer food to the hungry, water to the thirsty, clothes to those without, welcome to the stranger, and care for this sick and the imprisoned best represent God's priorities in this world. Our state was more just and welcoming to new members of the community when immigrants had access to Mainecare. Let us now restore this access and live out our values a little more fully in this world. Please vote yes on LD 718 and restore this method of caring for the sick and welcoming the new residents to our state.