

## MIRC TESTIMONY SUPPORTING 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"

**Health and Human Services Committee**

**Wednesday, April 15th at 10 am**

**Sponsor: Representative Rachel Talbot Ross**

Good Morning Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer  
and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services!

My name is Mufalo Chitam. I am here to testify in **SUPPORT of LD718** on behalf of the board and 77 members of [Maine Immigrants' Rights Coalition](http://www.maineimmigrantrights.org) (MIRC) with a commitment to advancing and defending the rights of immigrants.

Our mission is to improve the legal, social and economic conditions experienced by Maine's immigrants – enhancing their lives while strengthening Maine – through advocacy, information sharing and collaboration both through and among our member organizations.

Passing this bill will help to address inequities connected to the social determinants of health. social determinants of health, such as poverty, segregation, environmental degradation, and racial discrimination. This bill provides MaineCare and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) coverage for residents of Maine who are ineligible for federal Medicaid or CHIP coverage due to their immigration status.

The population growth in the last 10 years came from "People from Away." A bipartisan legislature in 1996 supported the use of state funds to continue providing MaineCare for everyone with low income, including immigrants. The Maine Kids Count 2021 Report states that in the early 2000s, Maine led the country with low rates of infant mortality. But in 2011 the LePage administration reversed that policy, cutting health care for about 500 people and for the period of 2011-2016 rates steadily increased to a high of 7 per 1,000 births.

Then in 2017, Mainers overwhelmingly voted to expand MaineCare and the report further shows that in 2018 and 2019, Maine's annual infant mortality rate was 5.4, again below the national rate of 5.7 per 1,000 births. Some factors which may have contributed to improvements include MaineCare expansion among other things. Between 2015-2019, the rate of mortality for Black infants in Maine was 64 percent higher than the rate of mortality for white infants. LD 718 closes remaining gaps in access to MaineCare for low-income Mainers including immigrants.

The need for New Mainers to have health care coverage has only been compounded by the pandemic. This bill is important now, especially at this monumental time....and not providing health coverage to anyone population in Maine means we are denying healthcare to ourselves. In the last 12 months, our community organizations have labored to educate our new immigrant communities about COVID19 and Vaccines because they have "internalized this discussion that they don't deserve access to health care because of their status. Passing LD 718 would allow us to have those earnest discussions in our immigrant communities "

COVID19 has shown how important the impact health care has on a person's life, so ensuring all people have coverage shouldn't be something that needs to be debated. Now more than ever "Health care is a right.....It's a right!" And so, we urge this committee to pass this bill.

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Contact:

Mufalo Chitam - Executive Director

[207-776-8138](tel:207-776-8138)

[mufaloc@maineimmigrantrights.org](mailto:mufaloc@maineimmigrantrights.org)

**a. 1 Marginal Way | FL 2 | Portland, ME 04101 | t. 207-956-7030 | f. 207-805-1679**

[www.maineimmigrantrights.org](http://www.maineimmigrantrights.org) | fb. @MEImmigrantRightsCoalition | t. @MaineRights | IG. @maineimmigrantrights

***Enhancing Immigrant Lives for a Stronger Maine!***

## MIRC MEMBERS

ACLU of Maine  
 African Women and Development  
 Angolan Community Association of Maine  
 Aspire For Humanity Initiatives  
 Baha'i Community and Organic Change  
 Black Owned Maine  
 Boundless MEDIA  
 Burundi Community Association of Maine  
 Cambodian Community Association of Maine  
 Capital Area New Mainers Project  
 CCM - Refugee and Immigration Services  
 Coastal Enterprises, Inc (CEI)  
 Choose Yourself  
 City of Portland - Minority Health Program  
 Congolese Brazzaville Community of Maine  
 Congolese Community of Maine  
 Congregation Bet Ha'am - Tikkun Olam Council  
 Cross Cultural Consulting Group  
 Cumberland Legal Aid Clinic, Refugee and Human Rights  
 Djibouti Community and Volunteer Services  
 Empower Immigrant Women(EIW)  
 First Parish UU Church  
 Frannie Peabody Center  
 Furniture Friends  
 Gateway Community Services Maine  
 Greater Portland Family Promise  
 Hispanic Ministry - Portland Diocese  
 Hope Acts  
 Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project  
 Immigrant Resource Center Of Maine  
 IN HER PRESENCE  
 Iraqi Community Association of Maine  
 Jewish Action Maine  
 Ladder to the Moon Network  
 Latinx Family Wellness & Recreation  
 Light Mission Church  
 Mahoro Maine Association  
 Maine Access Immigrant Network (MAIN)  
 Maine Business Immigration Coalition  
 Maine Citizens for Clean Elections - LWV  
 Maine Community Integration  
 Maine Council of Churches  
 Maine Equal Justice Partners  
 Maine Immigrant & Refugee Services  
 Maine Mobile Health Program  
 Maine Multicultural Center  
 Maine People's Alliance  
 Maine Unitarian Universalist State Advocacy  
 Maine Women's Lobby  
 Mano en Mano / Hand in Hand  
 NAACP  
 Network & Scholarships for Maine Immigrants Org  
 New England Djibouti Community  
 New Mainer Tenants Association  
 New Mainers PAC  
 New Mainers Resource Center-Portland Adult Ed.  
 Office of Maine Refugee Services-CCM  
 Portland Empowered  
 Portland Friends Meeting  
 Preble Street  
 Presente!ME  
 Prosperity Maine  
 Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland  
 Rwandese Community Association of Maine  
 Somali Bantu Community Association  
 Somali Community Center of Maine  
 South Sudanese Community Association of Maine  
 Southern Maine Community College  
 Southern Maine Workers Center  
 Sudanese Roots  
 Unified Asian Communities  
 Welcoming Immigrants Network (WIN) of Greater Portland  
 Welcoming Immigrants, Our New Neighbors

Annie E. Casey Foundation. KIDS COUNT Data Center. National infant mortality by race [datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/21-infant-mortality-by-race](https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/21-infant-mortality-by-race)

Caratalla, S. Center for American Progress. Health Disparities by Race and Ethnicity.2020.  
<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/race/reports/2020/05/07/484742/health-disparities-race-ethnicity/#:~:text=In%202017%2C%2010.6%20percent%20of,health%20insurance%20coverage%20in%202017>

The Maine Children's Alliance (2021 Maine Kids Count Data Report)

Mufalo Chitam  
Portland

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