

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

For decades, I have been watching the State of Maine grow and prosper on the backs of my neighbors and family.

While they provide the labor for the largest and most booming industries in Maine, agriculture, lobster processing, construction, tourism and hospitality, our State denies them their most basic human right. The right to health and to life.

Even when they have raked thousands of crates of blueberries, shucked hundreds of thousands of pounds of lobster, harvested broccoli, packed potatoes, washed our dishes, cooked our meals, built our houses and cleaned our toilets, they cannot afford to go to a simple check up at the doctor.

People are delaying care that they can't afford to be putting off. Parents agonize over the right moment to take their kids to the doctor. They sacrifice their own health and care, so they can at least afford to take their children.

We have seen the devastating impacts of delaying care play out in this pandemic. Rates of infection for Black and brown communities far outnumbered those in the white community, and that was just among those who tested. Our communities were more vulnerable because of lack of access to healthcare all the time. Not having access to basic interventions for diabetes, high blood pressure and asthma, means being more medically vulnerable, which means being at much higher risk of complications and life threatening outcomes when contracting covid. Many people in our community got very sick, and they waited until the last possible moment to seek lifesaving treatment and sometimes not at all. All because of the fear of not being able to pay.

My own family is a mixed status household. We cannot make even the most basic healthcare decisions without considering cost. We can't pick the providers or practices we feel most comfortable with.

My son immigrated to this country with his father when he was 1 year old. They came here fleeing violence and poverty, and hoping to find a better life. I have had the privilege of raising him since then. He is almost four years old now. He does not know anywhere else but Maine as his home. He loves our neighborhood. He loves our community garden plot. He loves the ocean. He talks to all the neighbors when they walk by. He doesn't know yet that he is not considered a person deserving of healthcare. He doesn't know he is a second class citizen. He doesn't have to think about it yet. But I do every day. I am six months pregnant. We are about to welcome a new child into our family. That child will have access to healthcare coverage. But my son still won't. How can I live with one child being worthy and my other child being unworthy, just because of where they were born? How can I feel like a good mom, if I cannot ensure my child the same healthcare coverage that my newborn will be afforded?

I am urging you to support this bill, because healthcare is a human right. Support this bill so that I don't have to explain to my son why he can't go to the doctor. Support this bill so the thousands of people that I work with in my community can experience the relief of having access to a doctor. Support this bill to protect our communities, and to support those who support all of us.

Thank you,
Crystal