

Mary Dunn
Whitefield

To Whom It May Concern,

I am asking you to please vote yes for LD 718.

Over the past two years I have supported those who work within our immigrant communities. Whether in the migrant agricultural communities, the Latinx communities of Portland, or the school community of Lewiston, the stories are similar. The members of these communities are good, hard working people. They have escaped some form of upheaval in their home countries. Usually that includes incredible violence and/or poverty which you and I can not begin to truly understand. Yet, here they are. Often thousands of miles away from their homeland. There is a poem that begins, "No one leaves home unless home is the mouth of a shark." This is so true for many in the immigrant communities. And now they are in Maine, their new home, where they are finally safe and free, and able to raise their children in a way that we all want to raise our children.

I have been honored to hear stories from those who have fled their homes and come up through our country's southern border. The stories they shared of why they left and the journeys they took to get here haunt me everyday. A question I ask myself over and over again is, "How on Earth did they survive such an ordeal?" But they did survive. And not only did they survive, they have become incredible members of our communities who give so much. New Mainers are some of the bravest, most intelligent, hard working, people I know.

Last winter I listened to a Zoom that included some of the leaders of the different native and immigrant communities in our state. They discussed the health and medical discrepancies that they were witnessing during the Covid pandemic. Discrepancies between white Mainers and new Mainers of Color. I was horrified to hear the statistics and saddened to hear the stories they shared. I wondered, "How could this be? Maine is a great state. Mainers are some of the most caring people I know." Yet this was and is happening. I recently read that immigrants contributed \$62 million in state and local taxes in 2016. How are they not allowed services such as health care for their families? The following year, 2017 we Mainers thankfully voted for Medicaid expansion because we believe in helping our families and neighbors. Now in 2021 we can do even better. We can close the gap in who receives health care by passing LD 718 which will include new immigrant Mainers who are our friends, family, and neighbors. Good people who contribute so much to our communities.

There is a sign that welcomes us home when we cross into Maine. Let's truly welcome everyone, including our new arrivals who now call Maine home.

Thank you,
Mary Dunn
Whitefield