

Good Morning Senator Ned Claxton and Representative Michele Myer, and members of the Health and Human Services Committee:

The Reverend Mia Dyson

I pastor a congregation in Wales Maine

I also work as a registered nurse in Labor and Delivery at Maine Medical Center

I come before you today to voice my strong support of LD 718

Sponsored by Representative Rachel Talbot Ross

"An Act To Improve the Health of Maine Residents by Closing Coverage Gaps in the MaineCare Program and the CHIP Program"

## **IMPACT ON IMMIGRANTS**

Both in my work as a spiritual leader, and in my work in bedside nursing, I see the wealth of skills, wisdom, energy and compassion that our immigrant community brings to Maine. Immigrants play a vital role in the future growth and vitality of our state. Yet we currently deprive them of access to MaineCare, weakening their ability to live and work to their fullest potential, or worse, condemning them to live with chronic disease and pain, or even to die from treatable causes.

I have a friend, whom I will call Renee. She was a married woman in Congo, raising a family, and working as a social worker. Her work focused on girls and women who had been raped as a form of political torture, and who bore a child conceived in that violence. These women were ostracized from their communities and lived in poverty and danger. Renee herself was targeted by the warring political forces, and she faced immediate threats to her own life. She fled the country and after a harrowing journey, arrived in Portland Maine. Renee suffers from severe PTSD, she has chronic pain and difficulty ambulating. She weeps every day for her husband and children. A gifted, compassionate person in need of healing on so many levels. She is the face

of our immigrant community who desperately need access to healthcare. Now.

## **FACTS**

In 2011.....LePage administration reversed Maine's longstanding commitment not to discriminate against immigrants, cutting approximately 500 people like Renee from the MaineCare roles.

In 2017, Maine voters resoundingly supported Medicaid expansion,

Now, Medicaid expansion is delivering critical affordable care for more than 70,000 Mainers during the pandemic.

With LD 718, Maine can close another gap in our healthcare system by offering MaineCare to our esteemed immigrant community.

## **ASK**

Friends, healthcare IS a human right. Please support this important bill and bring us a step closer to offering healthcare to every body.