



Testimony of Stephanie Eglinton

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In support of 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

April 15, 2021

Good morning, Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and members of the Committee on Health and Human Services. My name is Stephanie Eglinton and I am the Executive Director of the Maine Children's Alliance. We are a statewide non-partisan, non-profit research and advocacy organization whose mission is to promote sound public policies to improve the lives of Maine children, youth, and families.

I offer testimony on behalf of the Maine Children's Alliance in support of LD 718, which will restore access to health insurance for hundreds of Maine residents with low incomes who have had their eligibility restricted due to immigration status. The coronavirus pandemic has made it clear that when it comes to health, we are all interconnected. We all benefit and are healthier when everyone has access to health care.

Policies such as this one to close gaps in coverage to MaineCare and CHIP improve the well-being of families and will help address racial disparities in Maine's health outcomes. Access to equitable care is critical to getting every child off to a healthy start, and that starts before a child is born. The 2021 Maine KIDS COUNT Data Book publication notes racial disparities in areas of maternal and child health, such as Department of Health and Services data by race about women who received prenatal care. In 2019, Black women in Maine were less likely to benefit from prenatal care in the first trimester: 75 percent of Black women and 91 percent of white women received early care.

Maine's immigrants are part of our families, schools, and communities, and valuable contributors to our economy. During the COVID-19 crisis, many put their own health at risk while serving others as essential workers. It does not make sense that they should be denied access to MaineCare and the Children's Health Insurance Program.

As child advocates, the Maine Children's Alliances urges you to close this gap in coverage and support LD 718. Thank you for your consideration.