

I am writing 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. I am a life-long Mainer and community-based Licensed Clinical Social Worker in Cumberland County and believe that LD 718 would strengthen our communities across the state. I practice bilingually in Spanish, and currently work alongside many of my therapy clients to cobble together resources to make affordable and holistic mental healthcare a reality for low-income and immigrant families. It is in honor of the many stories I am privileged to witness that I write in support of this life-affirming measure, that would make the difference for so many Mainers.

It would make the difference for some of the extraordinary parents I meet who must decide between paying for prescriptions, such as insulin, and paying rent with the wages they earn in the food production industry, even as they are in constant pain when conditions such as diabetes go untreated. The health and emotional well-being of the whole family is improved when parents are able to meet their regular healthcare needs.

It would make the difference for many talented youth who are also coping with trauma, who require the right provider to offer them culturally and developmentally appropriate crisis and long-term therapy and other services to mitigate immediate safety risks and support them over time. Having a choice of provider leads to better outcomes in mental healthcare.

It would make a difference to the upcoming population of health workers, including therapists, many of whom are immigrants or children of immigrant families, who want to serve communities they represent. They may not be able to support themselves in this work if the services they offer are not adequately reimbursed. This is how we advance equity in our workforce.

LD 718 would make the difference between creatively finding loopholes in our current system of care so that someone *might* gain access to the services they need, and leading with best practices in the state of Maine. It is the distinction between a healthcare system that can only offer short-term emergency mental healthcare and providing holistic, consistent care and connection. Getting the best care is about relationship, fit, safety and trust. Let's make a difference for equity in healthcare for all Mainers.