



Maine Women's Lobby

THE VOICE OF MAINE WOMEN

April 15, 2021

Dear Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services,

I join you today on behalf of the Maine Women's Lobby. For over forty years, the Maine Women's Lobby has advocated for public policy which increases the health, wellness, safety, and economic security of Maine women and girls, with a focus on the most marginalized populations and communities. We write today **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.** We thank Representative Tepler for sponsoring this important bill.

As an organization founded on the idea of ending discrimination, we support policies that ensure that Mainers will not be discriminated against on the basis of gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, age, ability, or religion. LD 718 seeks to end Maine's discriminatory practice of excluding immigrants from accessing healthcare through MaineCare and CHIP, and we hope you will join us in supporting this proposal.

MaineCare keeps people alive. In an environment where employment is the primary means to health care access, MaineCare creates a path to coverage for Mainers who are unemployed, under-employed, and those who can't access employment due to needs related to health, mental health, disability, caregiving obligations, or other circumstances.

Women are less likely to be insured in Maine¹, and women and children are significantly more likely to live without income security and therefore to qualify for these programs. The current policy to exclude immigrant Mainers from these programs disproportionately affects women and children, and in fact exacerbates the inequalities that women face (as lack of health coverage is a contributor to poverty). We believe that healthcare is a human right – but it's important to note that gender injustice works in ways that we aren't always looking for.

Since the expansion of MaineCare in early 2019, more Mainers than ever before can access life-saving health supports, such as substance use treatment, emergency care, and preventative care. It's time to re-extend this coverage to our immigrant friends, families, and community members, and ensure that every Mainer has the health coverage they need to thrive. **We hope you will vote 'ought to pass' on LD 718.**

Sincerely,

Destie Hohman Sprague, Executive Director
Maine Women's Lobby / mainewomen.org

¹ Women's Issues in Maine. (2020). Retrieved from <https://nwlc.org/state/maine/>