

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services: My name is Christina Ocampo, I live in Milbridge and I am testifying in favor of LD 718.

I have worked in Washington County since 2014 and have seen the immense contributions that immigrants and farmworkers bring to the state of Maine. In Washington and Hancock County, thousands of immigrant and migrant workers ensure that the blueberry, wreath, lobster, restaurant, and hotel industries thrive. Their invisible labor keeps Maine on the map.

COVID-19 has brought to the forefront the inequities that disproportionately affect Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), including BIPOC farm and factory workers who continue to risk their lives to work on the frontlines. Farm and factory workers are essential workers. The majority of essential workers Downeast are immigrants. Essential workers should be valued beyond their economic outputs. If we're acknowledging their labor as essential, their health must also be.

I have seen the disparities in families that have access to healthcare and those who do not, simply based on the immigration status of each individual in the family. People are forced to make a choice between making a payment on a medical bill and buying groceries. I have seen individuals and families struggle to settle in a new area when they do not have the same access to resources. Young people graduate from their local high schools and do not have the same access to resources as their peers. Workers and parents avoid seeking immediate medical attention for fear that they may not be able to pay the final invoice. In doing so, they also sacrifice their health in the long run.

All Maine residents deserve equitable access to health care. This bill would provide healthcare to thousands of people whose contributions are essential to Maine. I am urging you to support LD718 and make healthcare a right for all.

Thank you,  
Christina