

Carolyn Silvius  
PORTLAND

Good Morning Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and members of the Health and Human Services Committee. My name is Carolyn Silvius and I'm from Portland. I am an advocate for Homeless Voices for Justice and a newly elected member of the Maine Green Party steering Committee. I wish to speak in favor of LD718 from both perspectives.

There are a couple of reasons why I believe that LD718 must be enacted. First and foremost is that Health Care is a basic human right. It's not just a right for those who qualify under certain arbitrary conditions like citizenship or access to General Assistance. It's a right for all humans. Allowing any person to suffer because he or she cannot afford to see a doctor is not only cruel, it is immoral and unconscionable. In 2017, Maine voters approved an expansion of Mainecare which has allowed many more people access to the health care they deserve. The Maine immigrant population is only about 2% of the total population, so allowing immigrants access is only a small and reasonable extension of that same expansion of Mainecare.

The other reason that LD 718 must pass is that it not only will affect the income eligible immigrants, it will affect every taxpayer in the state. Without access to affordable healthcare, when a person gets sick, he is unlikely to see a doctor and will try to treat what ails him by himself. The usual result of this policy is that the illness worsens, and by the time he gets emergency care, the treatment is twice or 3 times more involved and expensive. Further, if the disease is contagious, he may not know it and will have spread it far and wide. Germs don't discriminate. They attack the wealthy as easily as they attack the poor. The final result is that all taxpayers in Maine end up paying more than they would have had the ailment been caught and treated early.

Please support LD718 in your work session. Health care for immigrants is a human right and, ultimately, a savings for wealthy and working class taxpayers alike.