



Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and honorable members of the joint standing committee on health and human services. My name is Hamda, I live in Lewiston and work for New Mainers Public Health initiative as a program manager, it is an ethnic based organization that is located in Lewiston Maine. I am here today to support the LD 718.

When I came to this country in 2013 as an asylum seeker, I was only 19 years old, looking for a better future without leaving under the fear of a dictatorship system in Djibouti. I started to learn the language here and to volunteer at different places such as the Trinity Jubilee Center, Maine Immigrant and Refugees Services and also the place I currently work New Mainers public health initiative to assist the community that were facing the same problems as me (not being eligible to work, food and housing needs, language and cultural barriers...).

After one year of being in the United States, I was eligible for a full MaineCare since I was under 21 years old, I started a part-time job and enrolled to the community college as a full-time student. With my Maine care, I had the opportunity to receive a dental care and a vision care that I really needed at that time. Sadly, when I turned 21, and I was still a student without a stable job, I lost my health insurance. Since then, I lived under the fear of getting sick or getting hospitalized without having enough income.

Now that we work mostly with asylum seekers population, I see the same needs that exist within the community. For example, with the gift cards we distributed to low-income families while the pandemic, some of them were using to purchase insulin and other type of medication their health insurance was not covering. This bill will make a huge difference for those type of families that are struggling with many other issues that health care need is one of them.

I am asking the committee today to vote in favor for the LD 718 to make a lot of people's live safer!