



Testimony before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
An Act to Improve the Health of Maine Residents by Removing Exclusions to the MaineCare Program
March 28, 2023

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and Members of the Committee:

My name is Rev. Jane Field. I am the Executive Director of the Maine Council of Churches (and a constituent of Senator Sanborn's). The Council has seven member-denominations who represent 437 local churches with 55,000 parishioners across the state. I am testifying on behalf of the Council **in support of LD 199**.

As an organization whose members are rooted in the Hebrew and Christian scriptures and committed to creating a culture of justice, compassion and peace, the Maine Council of Churches affirms that, in a just society, all people are entitled to full access to health care. We reject as contrary to our understanding of the gospel the notion of differing standards of health care for people based on their immigration status.

We at the Maine Council of Churches believe that providing MaineCare to people regardless of their immigration status is more aligned with our faith's values than the current system because the scriptures we are rooted in urge us to "look out for the interests of others," "do unto others as you would have them do unto you," "love your neighbor as yourself," "carry each other's burdens," and "defend the rights of the poor."

Currently, some Mainers are excluded from MaineCare due to their immigration status and must choose between their health and other basic needs like food and shelter. But all Mainers - no matter where we come from - need affordable health care. LD 199 will make sure that our friends, family, and neighbors who are immigrants can visit the doctor or fill a prescription when they're sick.

Those family, friends, and neighbors are the backbone of some of Maine's most important industries including seafood, agriculture, hospitality, and essential services. So ensuring that they and their families have access to health care, both preventative and emergent, is good for Maine's economic well-being.

In 2017, Mainers voted overwhelmingly to expand Medicaid to ensure our neighbors with low incomes could afford health insurance. Yet many low-income residents were excluded from those historic gains based solely on their immigration status. It's time to finish what we started by making sure that everyone with low-income can access MaineCare when they need to - no exceptions, no exclusions.

Based on our belief that health care is not only a basic human NEED but also a basic human RIGHT and our belief that it is a moral imperative to transform health care so that it is inclusive, accessible, affordable and accountable, we call upon Maine's legislators to vote to provide MaineCare coverage to all residents of this great State.

We urge you to vote OUGHT TO PASS on LD 199.