



Maine Equal Justice
People Policy Solutions

MaineCare for everyone with low incomes, including immigrants, will make us all healthier and stronger

LD 718 means that immigrants who call Maine home will gain access to long-overdue, life-saving health coverage.

In the middle of a pandemic and recession, it's clear that our collective safety and our economic recovery are tied to each person's ability to get to the doctor or fill a prescription. **Immigrants are the backbone of some of our biggest industries**, like health care and food production, but health insurance is out of reach for many essential workers risking their safety and their lives to keep Maine running. In June, Maine had the largest racial disparity in the nation for COVID infections. Black Mainers accounted for about a quarter of all positive COVID cases, even though they represent less than two percent of the total Maine population. There were disparities for Latinx and Asian Mainers as well.

Immigrants are leaders in our communities, schools, workplaces, and governments, helping to build a brighter future for all of us. Immigrants contributed \$62 million in state and local taxes in 2016, and on average, immigrants who come to Maine are **more likely to have advanced education and start businesses** in Maine, creating or helping to retain thousands of jobs.

The way forward for healthcare in Maine

In 2017, Maine voters **resoundingly supported Medicaid expansion**, calling for more affordable health care for all. Now, Medicaid expansion is delivering critical affordable care for more than 70,000 Mainers during the pandemic. With LD 718, **Maine can close another gap in our healthcare system** while building a healthier future and a stronger economy for all Mainers.

LD 718 would be a huge step toward a **health care system that works for all of us, including immigrants** who are our family, friends, neighbors, and coworkers.



LD 718 deals with discrimination

In 1996, Congress barred Medicaid access for all but a few categories of immigrants. But that same year, with **strong bipartisan support**, the Maine legislature exercised its right under federal law to use state funds to **continue providing MaineCare** to Maine residents with low income who are immigrants. In 2011, in a departure from Maine's longstanding commitment not to discriminate against immigrants, the **LePage administration reversed** the policy, cutting health care for about 500 people.