



Maine Equal Justice

People Policy Solutions

Support Economic Security, Opportunity for ALL Maine People

Mainers look out for each other and pull together for families who don't have enough to eat or a safe place to live. That is why the Maine Legislature voted nearly unanimously to ensure access to anti-poverty programs for many immigrants in 1996. But in 2011, the LePage Administration barred many Maine immigrants from accessing basic supports.

As a result, many people, including asylum-seekers, are no longer able to access health coverage through MaineCare and it is much harder to access food assistance (SNAP) or help with basic needs for children (TANF). With these restrictions, the safety net all but disappeared for hundreds of people—almost all non-white—solely because of when and how they came to live in Maine.

A bill soon to be introduced in the Maine legislature will restore access to these anti-poverty programs for immigrants who were unfairly barred access. This will result in a more equitable safety net that does not discriminate against people based on race, ethnicity, religion, or country of origin. At a time when immigrants seeking freedom and opportunities in our country have been treated cruelly elsewhere, in Maine we can take steps to treat our immigrant neighbors with the same dignity we afford our other friends and neighbors – the same dignity and compassion we all deserve to be treated with when we fall on hard times.

Immigrants are vital to our state

Across Maine, immigrants are building new lives for their families and strengthening our communities. From Madawaska to Kittery and Lewiston to Millbridge, immigrants who have made their home here are making our state stronger.

We have an overly complicated immigration system and some people need help to rebuild their lives after fleeing persecution, war, and violence. Others may need some support when they fall on hard times or face a crisis. This bill will help people get a strong start here as they make Maine their home.



Fairness and equal opportunity are part of Maine's fabric

"Like so many Maine parents, we work very hard to support our family, pay our taxes and pay our rent. We try to do everything right for our family – especially our kids. We want them to be safe, educated and cared for. But we are still waiting for our asylum case to be processed. If something happens to me or my husband, and there is no safety net, I don't know what we would do."

"We need to grow our population and workforce to grow our economy, and we need to look beyond our borders and attract people from other states and countries to grow our population and workforce."

-2016 report from the Maine Development Foundation and Maine State Chamber Of Commerce¹

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¹ <http://www.mdf.org/publications/Maines-Labor-Shortage-New-Mainers-and-Diversity/895/>