



# Maine Women's Lobby

THE VOICE OF MAINE WOMEN

Testimony of Whitney Parrish

Maine Women's Lobby

In support of LD 1317

An Act To Restore Services To Help Certain Noncitizens Meet Their Basic Needs

April 12, 2019

Senator Gratwick, Representative Hymanson, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services: my name is Whitney Parrish, Director of Policy and Program for the Maine Women's Lobby. The Maine Women's Lobby is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, statewide membership organization devoted to raising the economic, social, and political status of Maine's 678,000 women and girls.

I am pleased to speak to you today in strong support of LD 1317, *An Act To Restore Services To Help Certain Noncitizens Meet Their Basic Needs*.

Maine women continue to earn less than their male counterparts and disproportionately live in poverty—they also continue to be the ones who disproportionately assume responsibility for taking care of children and elder parents and family. They are accessing Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits to feed their children, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits to provide for their families, and Medicaid to address critical medical needs. These core economic security programs are highly effective: they cut poverty almost in half, improve nutrition and health care for millions of people, and promote work.<sup>i</sup> Access to these programs is essential to creating an equitable safety net that does not discriminate against people based on race, ethnicity, religion, or country or origin. We must ensure that immigrants, and particularly immigrant women of color who face steeper barriers to economic security, are treated with the same dignity and compassion that all Mainers deserve.

As you've heard, Maine has a long history of being inclusive of immigrants in our state-funded safety net programs. In 1996, with strong bipartisan support, the Maine legislature exercised its right under federal law to use state funds to continue providing critical assistance to residents in need who are immigrants. Let's revive and continue this tradition; our immigrant neighbors are the key to Maine's future. They are leaders in our communities, significant contributors to a strong economy, and they enrich and

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<sup>i</sup> Golden, Olivia. *Building on Successful Anti-Poverty Policies and Avoiding What Doesn't Work*. Clasp. 2019. Accessed at <https://www.clasp.org/whats-next/building-successful-anti-poverty-policies-and-avoiding-what-doesn%E2%80%99t-work>

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strengthen our communities. We strongly urge you to vote ought to pass on LD 1317. Thank you for your time.

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