



Testimony before the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government
In Support of LD 2:
An Act To Require the Inclusion of Racial Impact Statements in the Legislative Process
February 3, 2021

Senator Baldacci, Representative Matlack and Members of the Committee:

My name is Rev. Jane Field and I'm the Executive Director of the Maine Council of Churches, with its seven Protestant member-denominations representing 437 of Maine's churches and 55,000 parishioners. **We support passage of LD 2.**

We are deeply grateful for the work of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous and Maine Tribal Populations, led by Rep. Talbot Ross. When our Board met with Commissioner Rev. Kenneth Lewis to learn about their work, one of the key take-aways was the importance of analyzing racial impact as bills are in Maine's legislative process, not after they're drafted—and that's what LD 2 would ensure happens.

This isn't a partisan issue. And it's not about legislators or the bills they sponsor being overtly, intentionally racist. The truth is, even bills crafted with the best of intentions often have unforeseen consequences that end up doing more harm to communities of color than good. Let's not forget, after all, what we say about where the road leads to that's paved with good intentions...

Analyzing the racial impact of bills as they are drafted would help minimize or even eliminate unintended negative consequences for Maine's communities of color. It would help our legislature to produce better, more effective, more just policies and laws. And I know that is a goal we all share.

I'm here today because of what we, as people of faith, believe: that every person is created in the image of God and deserves respect and justice; that we are called by God to build a society where everyone is safe, respected, and can share in a true democracy; that we mustn't look away or shudder in silence when racism—be it individual or systemic, intended or unintended, explicit or implicit—denies this to people of color.

You may think this means we're soft-hearted—and we are (proudly so!). But we're not soft-headed. We believe in achieving the goals we value through good public policy based on hard data. (Before I went to seminary to get this fashion accessory around my neck, I got a Master's degree from Princeton University's school of public policy, so I've been trained to value the importance of data-driven policy-making.) And LD 2 would move Maine into the lead on crafting smart, effective, data-based laws and policies that don't perpetuate racial inequities.

That's the kind of leader Maine should be—not one who leads the nation in racial disparities of COVID cases, or where poverty rates for Mainers of color are three times those of white Mainers. We can do better. *We must* do better. And LD 2 is an effective tool for you, as legislators, to use to ensure that we do.

The Maine Council of Churches urges you to vote "ought to pass" on this important bill. Thank you.