



Permanent Commission RACIAL, INDIGENOUS & TRIBAL POPULATIONS

LD 244 “An Act to Provide Safe, Short-term Housing to Indigent Individuals Recently Released from Correctional Facilities”

February 11th, 2025

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, and Honorable Members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee.

My name is Rae Sage, and I am the Policy Coordinator for the Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous, and Tribal Populations. The Permanent Commission’s role is to examine racial disparities across all systems and advise Maine State Government on ways to improve the status and outcomes of historically disadvantaged racial, Indigenous, and tribal populations.

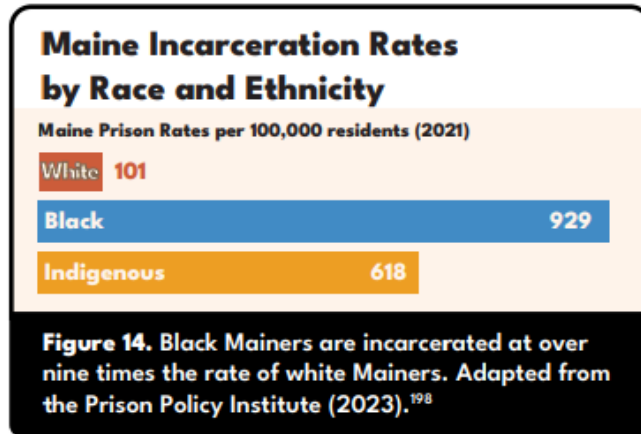
The Policy Committee of the Permanent Commission supports legislation that diverts people from involvement with the criminal legal system and mitigates collateral consequences for justice impacted individuals. On the basis of this position, the Policy Committee supports LD244 as it targets one of the elements most vital to reducing recidivism; access to safe housing.

The Policy Committee of the Permanent Commission has identified access to housing as foundational to advancing racial equity for historically disadvantaged populations and this is especially true in the context of justice impacted individuals.

The state currently ranks 44th out of 50 for racial disparity in state prisons, with Black Mainers incarcerated at over nine times, and Indigenous people incarcerated at over six times the rate of white Mainers (see Figure Below).¹ Just as people who are already

¹ Prison Policy Institute. Maine profile. (n.d.). <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/profiles/ME.html>

marginalized are more likely to face incarceration, those who have been incarcerated are more likely to face challenges in finding stable housing, securing loans, completing their education, and finding stable work. By providing short term housing to those recently released from correctional facilities, we work to mitigate the crushing weight of compounding disparities while offering a stable landing place for those navigating reentry.



QUICK FACTS

The average income needed to purchase a median-priced home in Maine today is **\$106,225**. The median income in Maine is **\$68,316**.

Maine has the nation's lowest rental vacancy rate (2.1%) as of 2023.

47% of the state's unhoused population is Black, despite only making up **1.6% of Maine's population**.

Only **28%** of Black Mainers own their home, compared with **76%** of white Mainers.

Maine ranks 50th out of 50 states in terms of racial equity in homeownership.

For more information on how criminal legal system reform and housing impacts racial, Indigenous, and tribal populations in Maine please see the Permanent Commission's [State of Racial Disparities Report](#) available on our website and in print.