



## MAINE BLACK CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

[mainebcc.com](http://mainebcc.com)

January, 22nd 2026

Submitted by: Maine Black Chamber of Commerce (MBCC)

Re: LD 517 – An Act to Protect the First Amendment Rights of Individuals in the State

Position: In Support

Good Morning Chair and Members of the Committee,

The Maine Black Chamber of Commerce (MBCC) strongly supports LD 517, An Act to Protect the First Amendment Rights of Individuals in the State, because safeguarding freedom of expression is fundamental to our mission of empowering entrepreneurs, strengthening community dialogue, and ensuring all voices – especially those from historically marginalized communities – are heard. Freedom of speech and expression are not abstract ideals; they are core tools for business owners and community leaders to advocate, share ideas, educate customers, and build solidarity across Maine. This legislation reinforces Maine’s commitment to uphold that constitutional right for every individual, including small business owners, creatives, and advocates who rely on open discourse to advance equitable opportunity and economic inclusion.

Protecting First Amendment rights not only ensures that people can speak freely, it supports a more vibrant economy and civic life. MBCC’s members include entrepreneurs who use media, public engagement, and digital platforms to share their stories, attract customers, build partnerships, and contribute to Maine’s diverse economy. Allowing these voices to flourish without undue restriction strengthens our communities and broadens participation in public dialogue. MBCC urges the Legislature to support LD 517 so that residents – particularly those from underserved communities – are fully empowered to participate in Maine’s civic and economic life without fear of censorship or limitation.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

*Joshua Bristow*

President

Maine Black Chamber of Commerce