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Andrew B. MacLean, JD, CEO | Dan Morin, Director of Communications & Government Affairs

TO: The Honorable Joseph Baldacci, Chair
The Honorable Ann Matlack, Chair
Members, Joint Standing Committee On State and Local Government

FM: Dan Morin, Director of Communications and Government Affairs

DATE: February 3, 2021

RE: **Support**
LD 2—An Act To Require the Inclusion of Racial Impact Statements in the Legislative Process

The MMA is a professional organization representing more than 4300 physicians, residents, and medical students in Maine whose mission is to support Maine physicians, advance the quality of medicine in Maine and promote the health of all Maine residents.

According to the bill summary, LD 2 would require, upon the request of a committee of the Legislature, the commissioner of a department or director of an agency to provide to that legislative committee data, analysis and other information necessary to prepare a racial impact statement, which is an assessment of the potential impact that legislation could have on historically disadvantaged racial populations.

Numerous publications and studies have demonstrated how racism affects housing, education, healthcare, criminal justice, and more. Active engagement is what institutions need to dig their way out of systemic racism and promote diversity. The responsibility is not only on the shoulders of the Legislature. All private and public organizations need to first focus internally, and work together, to encourage people from various racial and ethnic backgrounds to explore, learn about, and develop an appreciation for systemic racism, discriminations, and societal disparities, and potential solutions to improve and correct them.

The Maine Medical Association Board of Directors released a [Statement on Systemic Racism](#) during the summer of 2020 in response to the social unrest over high-profile violent police interactions, including the death of George Floyd. They recognized that physicians should play a critical role to promote racial and ethnic equality and work directly to eliminating the racism and ethnic discrimination that contribute to health care disparities.

The MMA Committee on Race, Ethnicity, and Healthcare Disparities was formed in late 2020. Although not a yet formalized goal, the focus will be to initiate, encourage, and support efforts to increase physician workforce diversity, remove implicit bias in health care oversight and delivery, and eliminate racial health disparities through awareness, education, training, research, effective interventions, and advocacy. MMA leadership has given a great deal of thought to the construct and charge of the committee and sincerely hopes it will lead to much needed, and overdue change in health care.

In June 2020, the American Medical Association (AMA) acknowledged the health consequences of [violent police interactions](#) and denounced racism as an urgent threat to public health, [pledging action](#) to confront systemic racism, racial injustice, and police brutality. [New policy](#) adopted by physicians at the AMA's November Special Meeting of its House of Delegates recognized racism as a public health threat and committed to actively work on dismantling racist policies and practices across all of health care.

Although the term 'disparities' is often interpreted to mean racial or ethnic disparities, many dimensions of disparity exist, particularly in health. If a health outcome is seen to a greater or lesser extent between populations, there is disparity. Race or ethnicity, sex, sexual identity, age, disability, socioeconomic status, and geographic location all contribute to an individual's ability to achieve good health. It is important to recognize the impact that social determinants have on health outcomes of specific populations.

Racial Impact Statements in the legislative process can be a useful and tool for evaluating how different racial and ethnic groups will likely be affected by a proposed bill or policy issue, and could be helpful if used to minimize anticipated adverse, and sometimes unintended consequences

of policies. It is vital that state government take the lead in preventing institutional racism and for identifying new options to remedy long-standing inequities.

For the above-mentioned reasons, the Maine Medical Association supports LD 2 in its current form. Thank you for the opportunity to present our comments.

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