



# Permanent Commission RACIAL, INDIGENOUS & TRIBAL POPULATIONS

LD210 “An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2025, June 30, 2026 and June 30, 2027”

February 24, 2025

Good Afternoon Senators Rotundo and Ingwersen, Representatives Gattine and Meyer, and members of the Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Health and Human Services.

My name is Rae Sage, and I am the Policy Coordinator for the Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous, and Tribal Populations. Our 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.

## **Biennial Budget, Part VV**

The Policy Committee of the Permanent Commission supports policy changes that create and expand programs that increase access to food for historically marginalized communities.

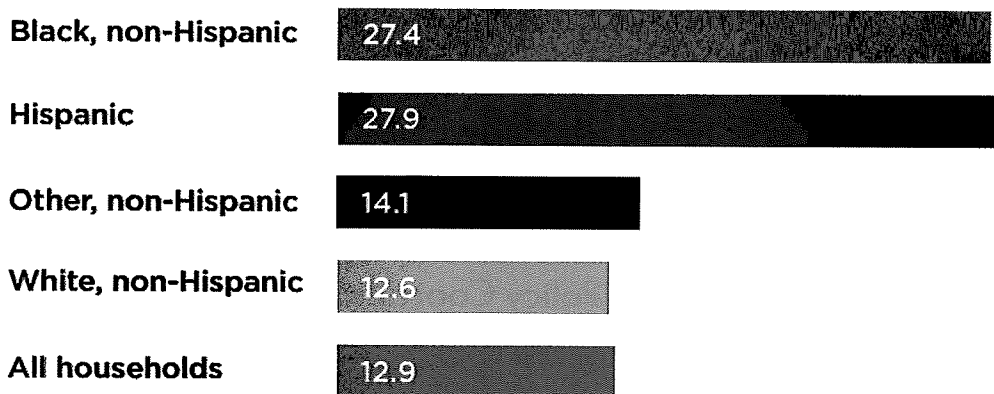
Part VV, as currently drafted, proposes cuts to food assistance and income support for immigrant families by repealing the Limited Hardship exception for state-funded SNAP and TANF. The Limited Hardship program currently allows those who have work authorization but have not yet found employment, or who have been working but lost their job to receive temporary benefits until they find work. Obtaining a work permit is not the same as finding safe, secure, and meaningful employment that allows immigrant populations to meet the needs of their families. Repealing the Limited Hardship exception for state-funded SNAP and

TANF benefits leaves immigrant populations especially vulnerable at a critically vulnerable moment.

As noted in the 2024 Annual Report on Ending Hunger in Maine, published by the Governor’s Office of Policy, Innovation, and the Future (GOPIF), **food insecurity is twice as high for Hispanic/Latinx and Black households in Maine than for the overall population.**<sup>1</sup>

### Maine Household Food Insecurity by Race/Ethnicity

10-year annual average 2013-2022



Also as noted in the annual report, the initiating 2019 legislation Resolve to End Hunger in Maine by 2023, **stated that the human, social, and economic costs of hunger and food insecurity in Maine were enormous, far-reaching, and unacceptable.**

Permanent Commission staff participated in the 2024 working group (convened by GOPIF) related to Maine’s Roadmap to End Hunger. The shared overarching goal of the work was to reduce the prevalence and severity of food insecurity in Maine. The working group included state agencies, nonprofits, and community based organizations, including those directly representing New Mainer communities. These entities all worked together to assess what actions would best advance the work of addressing food insecurity in Maine, while also providing the greatest impact in terms of equity. One of the priority areas identified through this

<sup>1</sup> Governor’s Office of Policy, Innovation and the Future. “2024 Annual Report: Ending Hunger in Maine” (February 2024). Available at: [https://www.maine.gov/future/sites/maine.gov/future/files/2025-02/GOPIF\\_EndingHunger021025\\_2\\_0.pdf](https://www.maine.gov/future/sites/maine.gov/future/files/2025-02/GOPIF_EndingHunger021025_2_0.pdf)

working group is to expand access and impact of food assistance programs, particularly for disproportionately impacted communities (annual report, page 10, linked in footnote 1).

Access to healthy, nutritious, and culturally appropriate foods is at the center of all human wellbeing. As noted in “The State of Racial Disparities” report published by the Permanent Commission, Maine had the highest average rate of food insecurity in New England in recent years. Lack of access to healthy and nutritious food has serious chronic health impacts. In children, food insecurity also hampers language and motor skill development and hurts school performance.<sup>2</sup>

As Mainers, we know that all people regardless of age, race, or national origin deserve to have access to the food that sustains them. Access to healthy, nutritious, and culturally appropriate foods is at the center of all human wellbeing and is essential to support the success of families in Maine.

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<sup>2</sup> Permanent Commission. “The State of Racial Disparities: A Report on Racial Inequality in Maine”. (November 2024).