



MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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May 5, 2025 - Testimony in support of LD 1593:

An Act to Require Certain Entities to Define Their Use of the Term "Equity"

Good afternoon Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Representative Billy Bob Faulkingham, and I serve as the House Republican Leader. I represent House District 12, which includes Franklin, Gouldsboro, Hancock, Sorrento, Sullivan, Winter Harbor, and Steuben. I'm here today to testify in support of ***LD 1593 - An Act to Require Certain Entities to Define Their Use of the Term "Equity"***.

At its core, LD 1593 is about transparency, accountability, and public trust. It does not seek to interpret the social or political intentions behind equity initiatives, instead it seeks to ensure that when public institutions invoke the term "equity" to justify actions such as adopting personnel policies, awarding contracts, or shaping hiring practices, the public clearly understands what exactly is meant and how success is being measured.

In recent years, "equity" has become a guiding term for many public policies. But without a clear, consistent definition, it risks becoming a vague or politicized term that confuses more than it clarifies. LD 1593 doesn't seek to judge our "equity" policies, it simply asks public institutions to define it for themselves, in plain language, and to share how they will measure their progress.

There is widespread public confusion, and often disagreement, about what "equity" means in practice, especially in the context of public policy. For instance, "equality of opportunity" ensures access for all, while some interpretations of "equity" focus on engineering outcomes. These are fundamentally different approaches and the public deserves to know which is being pursued.

Government and educational institutions are publicly funded and must be held to the highest standard of openness. The public deserve to know:

- What does "equity" mean in a specific policy context?
- What criteria are being used to judge whether an initiative is equitable?
- How are outcomes being assessed and communicated to the public?

Requiring entities to post their definitions and metrics on publicly accessible websites strengthens transparency in our government without imposing ideological judgment.

When public agencies use ambiguous language to justify actions, it breeds skepticism, regardless of political affiliation. By defining terms and setting measurable outcomes, we move away from rhetorical ambiguity and toward fact-based governance.

LD 1593 is not an attempt to judge whether equity policies are right or wrong, that is a separate debate; however; it is an invitation to define equity clearly, so that the public can evaluate those policies on their actual merits. This bill promotes government accountability and ensures that the pursuit of equity is grounded in transparency and measurable action.

I urge the committee to support this legislation and affirm the importance of openness in our public institutions. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Billy Bob Faulkingham". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rep. Billy Bob Faulkingham
House Republican Leader