

**TESTIMONY OF TOBIN WILLIAMSON SUPPORTING LD 1447:
An Act To Require Training in Racial Issues, Racial Justice and Social Issues at the Maine
Criminal Justice Academy and To Establish Additional Requirements for Law Enforcement
Officers and Candidates**

Work Session scheduled for Wednesday, Jan. 19, 2022 at 11:00 am

Sponsor: **Representative Lori GRAMLICH of Old Orchard Beach**

Link: <https://legislature.maine.gov/bills/getPDF.asp?paper=HP1063&item=1&snum=130>

I am here to testify in support of LD 1447 on behalf of the board and members of the Maine Immigrants' Rights Coalition (MIRC), a coalition of more than 80 member organizations with a commitment to advancing and defending the rights of immigrants. Our mission is to improve the legal, social, and economic conditions experienced by Maine's immigrants – enhancing their lives while strengthening Maine – through advocacy, information sharing and collaboration both through and among our member organizations. We actively prioritize the voices, perspectives, and decision-making of New Mainer communities as we acknowledge the status quo of systems that consistently disadvantage them. MIRC envisions policies that will not exacerbate inequities across BIPOC groups, including divisions across the country of origin, socioeconomic status, state geography, language, and immigration status.

Eric Garner. Breonna Taylor. George Floyd. Tamir Rice. Philando Castile. Botham Jean. You have probably seen or heard most, if not all, of these names. They were Black people whose lives were sadly cut short at the hands of police officers. They all became widely known only after their deaths, as people across the country and even the world called for justice for them on social media and in large protests. None of their situations should not have resulted in their death. And yet, these random people of color are known because of the ways in which they died: at the hands of law enforcement.

We feel the type of “training regarding racial issues, racial justice, and bias-based profiling” called for by this proposed legislation is urgently needed. As Maine gets increasingly diverse – racially, linguistically, religiously – this sort of training for law enforcement officers and candidates will become increasingly important. MIRC serves Maine's refugees, immigrants, and asylum seekers; many of these Mainers are people of color who may not speak English very well. We do not want to see a Mainer's name tragically become a new hashtag on social media because they were killed by law enforcement in situations that could have been prevented.

Therefore, the Maine Immigrants' Rights Coalition (MIRC) supports LD 1447, and hopes to see it passed by the Maine State Legislature.

###

Contact:

Tobin Williamson – Advocacy Manager

479-880-6274

tobinw@maineimmigrantrights.org