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Testimony of Rep. Denise Tepler presenting
LD 1607, An Act To Criminalize Calls Made to Emergency Services Based on Racial Profiling
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

Senator Deschambault, Representative Warren, and esteemed members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee, I am Denise Tepler, representing House District 54, all of the sweet Town of Topsham. I am pleased to present to you today **LD 1607, An Act To Criminalize Calls Made to Emergency Services Based on Racial Profiling.**

I put this bill in when I heard the news of the woman in New York City who harassed an African American bird watcher by calling 9-1-1 to falsely report him for “threatening” behavior. I thought of my sons, both of whom are Black. One of them had the unfortunate experience of being videotaped by a neighbor (in the next neighborhood over) for nothing more than riding his bike around.

California, Oregon, New Jersey, and the cities of Grand Rapids, Michigan and San Francisco, California are all either considering or have passed similar legislation to this.

I have no interest in creating a new crime, however, this kind of behavior is already punishable by law for other false reports. This bill just specifies a type of false reporting based on racial profiling. I believe it is important in making our state a welcoming place for all kinds of Mainers, that we acknowledge that using a person’s race as a reason to view them suspiciously or as not belonging, is wrong behavior. And using it as a reason to report them to the police is similar to pulling the fire alarm when nothing is burning.

Thank you for your time and I will attempt to answer any questions you have.