



Testimony of Stephanie Eglinton,  
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LD 274, Resolve, Directing the Maine Health Data Organization To Determine the Best Methods  
and Definitions To Use in Collecting Data To Better Understand Racial and Ethnic Disparities in  
the Provision of Health Care in Maine

February 23, 2021

Senator Sanborn, Representative Tepler, and esteemed members of the Committee on Health  
Coverage, Insurance, and Financial Services:

My name is Stephanie Eglinton, and I am the Executive Director of the Maine Children's Alliance. Our organization is a public policy, nonprofit improving the lives of Maine children, youth and families through research, collaboration, and advocacy. For over 25 years, MCA has promoted sound policies and best practices to make sure all Maine children have the resources and opportunity to reach their full potential from birth to adulthood.

The Maine Children's Alliance is testifying in support of the proposed legislation. One of our organization's core principles is the use of data to drive effective policy for children and families. Only through collecting and analyzing disaggregated data can we understand the gaps and inequities in our systems of services and programs and create policies to ensure they are accessible and equitable.

The COVID-19 crisis has elevated the need and importance of good health data in determining where there are disparities and in indicating how best to formulate and implement an effective public health response. It also shined a harsh light on existing racial inequities that have been exacerbated by the pandemic.

The socioeconomic factors of employment type, living situations, and health conditions created the context for significant differences in the degree to which Black and white people have experienced the negative impacts of COVID-19 here in Maine. While Black men and women represent an estimated 1.3 – 2.1 percent of Maine's total population, in June 2020, they accounted for 25% of the population who tested positive for COVID-19 where race was reported. This striking disparity was at that time the largest in the nation.<sup>i</sup>

This pandemic has revealed a fractured health care system that disproportionately fails Black, Indigenous and people of color in our state. This legislation provides an opportunity to improve data collection and analysis of health outcomes by race and ethnicity. With better information,

decisionmakers and industry leaders can learn the drivers of inequities, and begin to develop meaningful policy and practice changes to ensure all Mainers receive equitable health care and health outcomes in our state.

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<sup>i</sup> Maine Children's Alliance, [Black Mainers Are Being Hit Hard By COVID-19](#)