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Testimony of the Maine Osteopathic Association
Before the Committee on Health and Human Services

In Reference to:

LD 1113, Resolve, To Direct the Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous and Maine Tribal Populations To Study and Propose Solutions to Disparities in Access to Prenatal Care in the State

Public Hearing: Tuesday, April 6, 2021 9:00 AM, Cross Building, Room 209

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Committee on Health and Human Services,

My name is Lisa Gouldsbrough, DO. I am board certified in Pediatrics and I practice in Kennebunk, ME. As a Past President of the Maine Osteopathic Association (MOA) and the Chair of the MOA's Task Force on Equity, I am pleased to provide written testimony on behalf of my physician colleagues in support of **LD 1113, Resolve, To Direct the Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous and Maine Tribal Populations To Study and Propose Solutions to Disparities in Access to Prenatal Care in the State.**

The Maine Osteopathic Association is a professional organization representing approximately 400 osteopathic physicians and an additional 700+ residents and students. Our mission is to "serve the Osteopathic profession of the State of Maine through a coordinated effort of professional education, advocacy and member services in order to ensure the availability of quality osteopathic health care to the people of this State."

This resolve directs the Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous and Maine Tribal Populations to study disparities in access to prenatal care in the State and then authorizes that commission to submit legislation that serves to create equity in access to prenatal care in the State to the Second Regular Session of the 130th Legislature.

We believe this is an important step to correcting the inequities in our healthcare system in Maine. In June 2020, the MOA Board of Directors formed a Task Force to examine the role of systemic racism in Maine's healthcare system, and to find ways to ensure that we are equitably serving all Mainers.

We recognize that true disparities in our healthcare delivery system in Maine exist. In our initial statement of the Task Force's formation, we recognized that "As of June 9th, according to the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Black Mainers accounted for 24 percent of total cases of

COVID-19 in which racial data was disclosed. That rate is grossly disproportionate to the population of Black and African American people living in Maine, which stands at 1%.”

The Osteopathic approach reminds us that our bodies and ourselves are interlinked; the health of our patients is related to the health of our communities. We cannot improve the health of individuals and communities without a commitment to respect and value every individual regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, skin tone, socioeconomic status, political persuasion or abilities.

We support efforts to create equity in access to prenatal care in the State of Maine and we believe that this bill is well crafted in its attempt to start by studying the extent of disparities in access to prenatal care and then to use that data to recognize and inform corrective actions of any related inequities.

Please do not hesitate to contact us at info@mainedo.org if you have any questions. Thank you.