

TO: The Honorable Senator Claxton  
The Honorable Representative Meyer  
and the Committee on Health and Human Services

DATE: 04/06/21

RE: Supporting 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

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of LD 1113.

My name is Rachel Talbot Ross. I proudly represent House District 40 which comprises neighbors on Portland's peninsula. I sponsored the legislation that established the Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous, and Maine Tribal Populations in the 129<sup>th</sup> legislature, and come before you today in my role as a chair of the Permanent Commission.

The Permanent Commission is an independent entity with a mission of interrupting structural racism by examining racial disparities across all Maine systems, and to specifically work toward improving the status and outcomes for historically – generationally - disadvantaged racial, indigenous, and tribal populations. We are empowered to advise all three branches of government and can submit our own legislation. Our membership includes representation from the federally-recognized tribal nations in Maine along with people from diverse racial backgrounds.

Would like to begin by thanking the sponsor, Senator Carney, for bringing this bill forward. [According to data from the Maine Department of Health and Human Services](#), 82.5% of white mothers receive at least 80% of expected prenatal care visits. For African American mothers, only 62.6% receive that level of prenatal care. These disparities are a public health emergency, because decreased access to prenatal care increases the risk of poor health outcomes and even death for both the mother and the child.

The Permanent Commission is well poised to investigate this issue, report findings and, if necessary, present new legislation – rooted in data – to help protect the health of the African American and Indigenous mothers and children of our state.

We urge you to support LD 1113, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have. Thank you for your consideration.