

MIRC TESTIMONY SUPPORTING LD1034

An Act to Provide Funding to Support the Permanent Commission on the
Status of Racial, Indigenous and Maine Tribal Populations

State and Local Government Committee

Wednesday, April 14th at 10 am, Cross Building, Room 202

Sponsor: Representative Michael Sylvester

Good Morning Representative Mike Sylvester and Senator Joe Rafferty!

My name is Mufalo Chitam and please accept my testify in **SUPPORT of LD1034** on behalf of the board and members of the [Maine Immigrants' Rights Coalition](https://www.maineimmigrantrights.org) (MIRC) a coalition 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 strongly support providing funding to support the Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous and Maine Tribal Populations

The populations we serve are very vulnerable, have experienced the worst atrocities and they bring with them historical trauma. MIRC acknowledges the enormous racial disparity in the COVID-19 data in our state. Our communities of color are in unfathomable pain, distress, and devastation due to the disproportionate impact on their overall wellbeing as well as limited access to services in the midst of the pandemic. These communities are more likely to get sick and die from Covid-19 than white Mainers. These disproportionate outcomes are a result of limited access to healthcare, and the constant barrage of racial abuses and ongoing violence our communities face on a daily basis due to systems built to sustain the status quo of white supremacy. Structural and individual racism is a public health emergency.

MIRC now has a new capacity that we didn't have before. Over the years, we have grown significantly to 77 member organizations. This has created an enormous opportunity for a larger leadership role on policy issues relevant to immigrants and in the coordination of Maine's diverse immigrant communities on initiatives that will advance integration.

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. We believe in the power of New Mainers to make Maine a better place for all who live here and so envision policies that will not exacerbate inequities across people of color, including divisions across the country of origin, socioeconomic status, state geography, language, and immigration status.

Maine has seen a growth of immigrants in the last 10 years but lacks Infrastructure to support their economic and social integration. From available data, we know that significant disparities in COVID19, poverty, wealth, income, and rates of incarceration exist in communities of color in our state. Not funding the commission is intentionally allowing inequities like this to continue harming our population A dedicated staffing and administrative support will enable our state to have a better understanding of these factors which are key to developing solutions and evaluations.

This bill will help empower the commission to conduct research and advise all three branches of government to provide a range of culturally and linguistically specialized services for the state's communities of color specifically the immigrant populations. LD 1034 will support critical racial equity work. and so, we urge this committee not to pass this bill.

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Enhancing Immigrant Lives for a Stronger Maine!

MIRC MEMBERS

ACLU of Maine
 African Women and Development
 Angolan Community Association of Maine
 Aspire For Humanity Initiatives
 Baha'i Community and Organic Change
 Black Owned Maine
 Boundless MEDIA
 Burundi Community Association of Maine
 Cambodian Community Association of Maine
 Capital Area New Mainers Project
 CCM - Refugee and Immigration Services
 Coastal Enterprises, Inc (CEI)
 Choose Yourself
 City of Portland - Minority Health Program
 Congolese Brazzaville Community of Maine
 Congolese Community of Maine
 Congregation Bet Ha'am - Tikkun Olam Council
 Cross Cultural Consulting Group
 Cumberland Legal Aid Clinic, Refugee and Human Rights
 Djibouti Community and Volunteer Services
 Empower Immigrant Women(EIW)
 First Parish UU Church
 Frannie Peabody Center
 Furniture Friends
 Gateway Community Services Maine
 Greater Portland Family Promise
 Hispanic Ministry - Portland Diocese
 Hope Acts
 Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project
 Immigrant Resource Center Of Maine
 IN HER PRESENCE
 Iraqi Community Association of Maine
 Jewish Action Maine
 Ladder to the Moon Network
 Latinx Family Wellness & Recreation
 Light Mission Church

Mahoro Maine Association
 Maine Access Immigrant Network (MAIN)
 Maine Business Immigration Coalition
 Maine Citizens for Clean Elections - LWV
 Maine Community Integration
 Maine Council of Churches
 Maine Equal Justice Partners
 Maine Immigrant & Refugee Services
 Maine Mobile Health Program
 Maine Multicultural Center
 Maine People's Alliance
 Maine Unitarian Universalist State Advocacy
 Maine Women's Lobby
 Mano en Mano / Hand in Hand
 NAACP
 Network & Scholarships for Maine Immigrants Org
 New England Djibouti Community
 New Mainer Tenants Association
 New Mainers PAC
 New Mainers Resource Center-Portland Adult Ed.
 Office of Maine Refugee Services-CCM
 Portland Empowered
 Portland Friends Meeting
 Preble Street
 Presente!ME
 Prosperity Maine
 Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland
 Rwandese Community Association of Maine
 Somali Bantu Community Association
 Somali Community Center of Maine
 South Sudanese Community Association of Maine
 Southern Maine Community College
 Southern Maine Workers Center
 Sudanese Roots
 Unified Asian Communities
 Welcoming Immigrants Network (WIN) of Greater Portland
 Welcoming Immigrants, Our New Neighbors