



***Testimony in support of LD 1034***

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

Senator Baldacci, Representative Matlack and members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government, my name is Nicole Clegg and I serve as the Senior Vice President of Public Affairs at Planned Parenthood of Northern New England and am pleased to submit testimony in support of LD 1034.

Planned Parenthood of Northern New England provides comprehensive reproductive and sexual health care to more than 14,000 people in Maine at four health centers located in Biddeford, Portland, Sanford and Topsham. People turn to us for affordable, high-quality care including wellness exams, birth control, disease testing and treatment, cancer screenings, abortion care as well as a variety of primary care services. We see everyone who comes to us regardless of ability to pay, and in a typical year, we provide more than \$4 million in free and discounted care to our communities in Maine.

As a mission driven health care provider, we fundamentally believe everyone should be able to get affordable, high quality sexual and reproductive health care in their communities, no matter where they live or how much money they make and we advocate for policies that help make this vision a reality.

At PPNNE, we see how systemic racial disparities in public policy impact the lives of our patients as well as the care we deliver. We have witnessed firsthand how policies can disproportionately impact communities of color, leading to starkly different health outcomes. Whether it's how state agencies respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, policies to address maternal and infant health, or efforts to reduce rates of cancer, the outcomes for people of color tell the story of what happens societally without careful consideration to disparities based upon race.

That's why we were proud to support the creation of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous and Maine Tribal Populations two years ago. Its formation marked an important milestone in setting a course for a more equitable and just state government. Yet, for the Commission to fully realize its purpose, it needs to be adequately staffed and resourced to conduct the important work it has been charged to execute. LD 1034 would provide that necessary funding.

With appropriate funding and legislative support, the commission can accelerate its work in examining disparities and identify opportunities to improve the outcomes for historically disadvantaged racial, indigenous and tribal populations. Work that is important to the people of Maine and fundamental to the mission of the commission. Racial disparities are the result of a

complex set of factors including socioeconomic disadvantages, resource allocation, and biased decision-making, which is why this legislation is key.

Now is the time for us to take the next step, and provide sustained funding for the Commission, this bill will enable it to fulfill its purview: to conduct research, advise all three branches of government, submit its own legislation, hold public hearings, and more. LD 1034 will help individuals and policymakers reckon with the legacy of historical and systemic racism in our state. For these reasons, I urge you to vote to pass LD 1034.