

Testimony of Cumberland County Food Security Council
In Support of LD 1034
Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government

April 14, 2021

Senator Baldacci, Representative Matlack, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government, my name is Colleen Donlan and I am here today to testify in support of LD 1034: An Act To Provide Funding To Support the Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous and Maine Tribal Populations.

I represent the Cumberland County Food Security Council, a local non profit which focuses on racial equity in health services, food, and land justice. The Cumberland County Food Security Council (CCFSC) represents a diverse food system coalition that agrees our country's history of institutional racism is at the root of current poverty and food insecurity. We agree that scarcity of food is not the cause of hunger. People are food insecure because the systems we create allow for barriers to access resources necessary for people's survival.

CCFSC draws a direct link between economic and racial justice. Our Nation's history contains repeated instances of intentional policy choices resulting in economic disparities between people identified as white and black (or whatever term we chose for a particular era). The resulting economic inequality impacts not just people of color, but is the foundation for the poverty that afflicts everyone who can't put nourishing food on their table or who can't afford a home.

Maine, like the US, is plagued by significant disparities by race when it comes to economic security. In 2017, while approximately 15% of white children lived in poverty, the rate was over 40% for children from Maine's tribes and over 53% for children from Maine's African/American Diaspora families. In Maine, three out of four white people own their residences compared to less than one quarter of Black families.

The Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous and Maine Tribal Populations was created to examine how laws and institutional policies create disparate outcomes for different Maine populations. This bill would fund the essential work of the Permanent Commission. The Permanent Commission is ready to examine racial disparities across all systems and improve opportunities and outcomes for historically disadvantaged racial, indigenous, and tribal populations in the State. Please invest the adequate resources to do so.

I urge you to join the Cumberland County Food Security Council in support of LD 1034. Thank you for your time.