



Testimony of Stephanie Eglinton,
Executive Director, Maine Children's Alliance

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
4/14/21

Good morning Senator Baldacci, Representative Matlack, and distinguished members of the
Committee on State and Local Government:

My name is Stephanie Eglinton, and I am the Executive Director of the Maine Children's Alliance (MCA). We are a statewide non-partisan, non-profit research and advocacy organization whose mission is to promote sound public policies to improve the lives of children, youth, and families in Maine. MCA is committed to incorporating race equity into all aspects of our work, to address systemic and historic inequalities and create a more equitable Maine for children and families.

Racial disparities persist across the systems of employment, education, housing, health care, criminal justice, and economic security. As reported in MCA's [2021 Maine KIDS COUNT Data Book](#), Black children in Maine experience poverty at a rate that is not only higher than white children but higher than the U.S. rate for Black children. These disparities create unequal opportunity and limit the full potential of Maine children, families, and communities. To address this, policymaking in our state must become centered in equity.

Established through legislation in 2019, the Permanent Commission's mission is to examine racial disparities across systems in Maine and to help improve opportunities and outcomes for historically disadvantaged racial, indigenous, and tribal populations in the state.

The Permanent Commission has been meeting since then with little financial support. Even without much funding, the Commission was able to accomplish a lot, including issuing an initial report and examining the racial impact of bills in the last legislative session. With adequate funding, the commission can build staff to conduct research, engage with the public, and promote policy and practice changes that will move our state forward in creating a more equitable Maine.

The work of undoing racist systems in our state will take time and collective, sustained action. By investing in the Permanent Commission, we can ensure that there is an organizing body responsible for helping to keep race equity centered in policies and practices across our state, and to move us closer to the goal of creating equal opportunity for all Mainers to achieve success.

Thank you for your consideration.