



MAINE AFL-CIO

A Union of Unions Standing for Maine Workers
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Testimony of Adam Goode, Maine AFL-CIO Legislative & Political Director, 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"

Senator Baldacci, Representative Matlack and members of the Joint Standing Committee on State & Local Government, my name is Adam Goode. I am the Legislative & Political Director of the Maine AFL-CIO. We represent 40,000 working men and women in the state of Maine. We work to improve the lives and working conditions of our members and all working people. We testify in support of LD 1034.

The Maine AFL-CIO strongly supports LD 1034. This bill provides funding for staff to support the Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous and Maine Tribal Populations, which was formed in 2019 and is an independent government entity that is empowered to conduct research, advise all three branches of government, submit its own legislation, hold public hearings, and more.

We applaud the excellent work done by the members of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous and Maine Tribal Populations and want to recognize that work done by this group has had minimal staff support and has largely been done with expertise that is not paid for. The Permanent Commission has provided excellent work that will serve to limit systemic racism in Maine. In order to meet the Permanent Commission's full potential, the work should be sustainable.

We recognize that this is one step towards advancing racial justice in Maine. The need for an independent body to help individuals and policymakers reckon with historical and systemic racism in Maine has never been more clear. Black Mainers make up 1.4% of our state's population, yet it was reported that they made up 23.6% of the COVID cases in Maine last summer.¹ Funding the Permanent Commission is a very important step towards addressing this and similar racial disparities.

At the Maine AFL-CIO, we are committed to supporting policies that build worker power and dismantle structural and institutional racism. We are working to integrate anti-racism education and racial justice within our unions, Central Labor Councils and State Federation so we can combat the divide and conquer strategy that uses race to limit the power of working people. This hard work involves grappling with a long history of systemic racism in Maine and America that the labor movement has both contributed to and helped fight against. We constantly seek resources to better understand systems and structures that lead to racial disparities in order improve our organization. We think policy makers should seek out ways to proactively address factors that contribute to racial disparities, and believe sustainable funding of the Permanent Commission is a necessary step in providing that guidance.

Race has divided the working class throughout Maine's history. We work daily to tackle the issues that divide us, and fundamentally believe that racism harms union members of color. The beginning of the work done by the Permanent Commission has been a welcome addition to the fight to eliminate racial disparities. We urge you to support LD 1034 and to fund the work of the Permanent Commission.

¹<https://www.pressherald.com/2020/06/21/maine-has-nations-worst-covid-19-racial-disparity/>

