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Maine Community Action Partnership Supports LD 1034 An Act To Provide Funding To Support the Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous and Maine Tribal Populations

April 15, 2021

Senator Baldacci, Representative Matlack, ladies and gentlemen of the Joint Committee on State and Local Government, I am Megan Hannan, Executive Director of Maine Community Action Partnership, and we support LD 1034 An Act To Provide Funding To Support the Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous and Maine Tribal Populations

For more than 50 years, Community Action has served as a dynamic and community-based force in addressing the causes and conditions of poverty throughout Maine and the country. Our ten Community Action Agencies (CAAs) deliver programs and services for people with low- and moderate income, including the Home Energy Assistance Program, or HEAP; workforce development; the current rental relief program; Head Start and more. Larger CAAs can provide up to 200 separate programs, smaller generally are able to provide up to 25 or 30. Equity – in health, education and economic opportunity is a keystone of our Mission and work. We are focused on ending the systems and policies that allow or encourage racist outcomes.

This bill allots about \$1 million to staff the Permanent Commission which we fully support, as far as it goes. Just noticing the number of bills in this session requiring the Commission to study something, so soon after the creation of the Commission, shows that the staff and Commissioners have a job ahead of them. Making real, lasting and necessary change through the work I imagine the Commission and its staff will do is not easy, not fast, and not for the faint of heart. Systemic racism did not happen quickly and it cannot be dismantled quickly.

The coronavirus pandemic did not cause racial and ethnic disparities in health, economic opportunity or the social structure in our state. But for too many, it brought the issue to light. The Commission's duties and powers, which include carrying out research to determine the status of historically disadvantaged racial, indigenous and tribal populations, including the study of income levels of and opportunities available to historically disadvantaged racial, indigenous and tribal populations and the examination of quantitative and qualitative data associated with those populations regarding business ownership, household assets, debts and income, housing, employment, education, health care and access to wealth, capital and benefits; and seeking public input by conducting public hearings annually to obtain information about the needs of and solutions to the problems faced by historically disadvantaged racial, indigenous and tribal populations; and the list continues. We cannot expect the Commissioners or their staff to do all we are asking without funding.

I am happy to answer any questions that I can, now or in the work session.
Respectfully Submitted,

[Megan Hannan](#)