

Leigh Keichline
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Senator Baldacci, Representative Matlack and members of the State and Local Government Committee, I am Leigh Anne Keichline of the Restorative Justice Project Maine and I thank you for the opportunity to voice my support for LD 1034. I live in Wiscasset.

We can build houses of cards, or we can build up permanent structures with strength, digging down first, unearthing our history -- and then from there building a solid foundation. It's on that firmer foundation that we can confidently begin to build. In Maine, we believe in building things to last.

Establishing the Permanent Commission was a vital step in building that foundation, and building a house we can be proud of. This commission needs funding to support evidence-based work. It needs both breadth of viewpoint and depth over time, thoughtful work by experts in a variety of fields and by those with lived experience as Indigenous, Black, and People of Color here in Maine. This commission is valuable in its independence both from the branches of government and from political party.

The funding for this commission will pay for full-time staffing and administrative expenses -- the very basics which any administrative body or organization needs. The Permanent Commission has worked hard in its first year and has had some success, notably passage of LD 2 this year, requiring Racial Impact statements. Maine is providing leadership in creating this commission. But simply hanging out a shingle is not actual work, we know -- It's what comes after.

In our race equity committee within RJP Maine, we believe that undoing our society's foundational errors of inequity is something that requires hard work and much time. Deepening our understanding of issues takes hours of labor over months and years. It takes education; it takes exploring our histories; it requires research. Race equity work requires creating spaces for dialogue, spaces for healing, and for building anew. None of this work is fast, cheap, or easy. But like everything that is truly worth building, it is worth the effort.

I urge funding the Permanent Commission. I urge you to support an Ought To Pass recommendation for LD 1034.