

TESTIMONY

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”

Grace Leavitt, President, Maine Education Association

**Before the Joint Standing Committee on
State and Local Government
April 14th, 2021**

Senator Baldacci, Representative Matlack, and esteemed members of the Committee on State and Local Government,

My name is Grace Leavitt. I am a Spanish teacher on leave from Greely High School while serving as President of the Maine Education Association. The MEA has nearly 24,000 members—faculty and staff in our pre-K-12 public schools, our institutions of higher education, and many dedicated retired educators.

I am speaking on behalf of our members in support of LD 1034: “An Act to Provide Funding to Support the Permanent Commission on State and Local Government”.

I read the report of the Permanent Commission when it first was available this past September and just recently read it again in preparing this testimony. What the report contains, explaining what the Commission has already accomplished in a short time—and despite the pandemic!--is remarkable, but, while the report contains evidence of a great deal of work, it is truly only an initial step towards fulfilling the duties of the Commission as described in statute.

In order to continue moving forward and making real progress on obtaining “information about the needs of and solutions to the problems faced by historically disadvantaged racial, indigenous and tribal populations”, there is so much more that must happen, and this cannot happen without adequate support for staffing, as called for in LD 1034.

The MEA has set as a priority working on increasing awareness about issues of racial equity and social justice, and as our work has continued, we realize this work is a long process that must continue if we are to see tangible changes occur. The same is true of the work that the Commission has been charged with, the reason that the Commission was established.

We urge your support of LD 1034. This is essential so that the important work that the Permanent Commission has begun can move forward and help to bring about meaningful changes that will have positive impacts on people in Maine who have for far too long been disadvantaged and marginalized.

Thank you for your time, and feel free to contact me to answer any questions.

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