

Marcelle Medford
Permanent Commission

Testimony of Marcelle M. Medford
In Support of LD 1034

Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government

April 14, 2021

Good morning Senator Baldacci, Representative Matlack and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government. My name is Marcelle Medford and I have the honor of serving as a commissioner on the Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous and Maine Tribal Populations. I am testifying in support of LD 1034.

I serve on the Commission as a faculty member of a college specializing in the culture and rights of historically disadvantaged racial, indigenous and tribal populations. Maine's state history emerges from the intersection of slavery and settler colonialism; and the legacy of those histories bares its imprint on contemporary racial disparities in our state. Examining those disparities and creating solutions to racial oppression requires making that history visible and providing resources to abolish inequality.

The commission meets regularly to share our expertise on pressing racial and economic disparities. We dedicate our unpaid labor to support the efforts of racial justice at the state level. Yet our full capacity as experts is undercut by lack of resources. The full potential of our professional expertise is best realized when supported by the necessary administrative support staff. The time that could be spent collecting data with focus groups in the community, conducting oral histories from elders and young people, analyzing themes, and producing reports to help guide each branch of government is squandered on administrative tasks. Providing both academic expertise and administrative duties in neither efficient nor sustainable and puts the work of the Commission at risk.

In order for us to execute our research, public engagement, and advising to the local government, and more, the Permanent Commission has submitted this bill (LD1034) for funding to hire staff to continue its important work. If Maine legislators are serious about dismantling systemic racism, they should vote to pass this bill and support the work of the Permanent Commission.