



April 14, 2021

Senator Joe Baldacci
Representative Ann Matlack
Committee on State and Local Government
Cross Building, Room 214
Augusta, ME 04333

Submitted via Legislature's Testimony Submissions portal

Re: LD 1034, An Act To Provide Funding To Support the Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous and Maine Tribal Populations

Dear Senator Baldacci, Representative Matlack, and Honorable Members of the Committee:

I am the director of the Maine Business Immigration Coalition (MeBIC). MeBIC is Maine's only resource dedicated to providing information, education and advocacy on immigration and related issues from and for the business and economic perspective. MeBIC's partners include individual businesses, economic development leaders, and chambers of commerce such as the Maine State Chamber of Commerce. MeBIC strongly supports LD 1034.

Many of Maine's first generation immigrants are people of color. As such, they will encounter the same systemic problems that historically disadvantaged Black, Indigenous and People of Color across the country face, including here in Maine.

The Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous and Maine Tribal Populations (hereafter "Permanent Commission") was created as a result of legislation enacted in 2019. In hindsight, its creation unfortunately could not seem more prescient, as 2020 ushered in a greater awareness of the systemic racism and the glaring disparities faced by Black, Indigenous and other people of color in all aspects of life nationwide, as well as in Maine. The Permanent Commission, if able to fully carry out its mandate, will move Maine closer to becoming a state that not only aspires to, but takes real steps towards racial equity and justice.

However, the Permanent Commission simply cannot fully carry out its mandate without having its own staff. The personnel proposed in LD 1034 will not just convene and staff meetings of the commission (which is about as much as staff "loaned" by state departments are able to do given their need to perform their regular jobs as well) but also will be able to help the Permanent Commission do more in-depth studies and analysis of data and practices, including best practices, to inform and advance the Permanent Commission's work. A director of the Permanent Commission who has supporting staff, as LD 1034 would make possible, will be able to engage with peers and experts in other states, as well as with those working to advance racial justice and equity in Maine. By providing funding for expenses, LD 1034 would

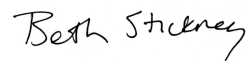
enable the Permanent Commission to offer stipends or pay travel expenses of individuals who could not otherwise afford to appear before it. And permanent staff may also be able to identify funding opportunities, from federal grants, private foundations, and other sources to help advance policies and practices to help dismantle systemic racism in Maine that would otherwise be overlooked if the Permanent Commission lacks its own staff.

Recently, nearly 100 Maine businesses, chambers of commerce, trade associations, and higher education institutions have signed the [Maine Compact on Immigration](#) (attached) urging state leaders to “adopt policies and practices to help Maine become a destination of choice for immigrants to the U.S. and that provide an environment where immigrants can reach their full potential in our state.”

The Permanent Commission is an important part of making Maine a state where immigrants of color may hope to live with fair treatment and opportunities, strengthening their families, and strengthening Maine.

Black, Indigenous and other Mainers of color should have equitable opportunities, whether their families have lived here since before the country was colonized, or for generations, or have moved here recently from across the country or around the globe. LD 1034 is essential to help the state reach and maintain that goal, and merits your support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Beth Stickney".

Beth Stickney, Esq.
Executive Director