

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

April 13, 2021

Senator Baldacci, Representative Matlack, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government, my name is Michael Tarpinian, a Community Volunteer, and currently Co-Chair of Thrive2027's Public Policy & Advocacy Committee. I submit this written testimony on behalf of Thrive2027 to support the work of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous, and Maine Tribal Populations as outlined in LD 1034. We believe this bill is critical to the continued work of addressing racial disparities.

Thrive2027 is our community's commitment to making Cumberland County stronger for everyone who calls it home. Powered by the community and led by United Way of Greater Portland, more than 300 business, non-profit, public, and community organizations have endorsed three 10-year goals that promise measurable and meaningful change in Greater Portland. These three goals are to (1) give kids a strong start, (2) empower neighbors to thrive – not just survive, and (3) help us all live longer, better.

Thrive2027 is not a new program – it is a new way of working. At the heart of this work is reviewing disaggregated data to understand where needs and gaps exist, determining what the implications of that data are, and identifying concrete solutions that can be implemented to address them.

Available data in our state show disparities that mirror those at the national level. For example in Cumberland County, data show that:

1. 11% of all children live in poverty with 44% of Black/African American children living in poverty. (U.S. Census, 2019).
2. 97% of white individuals over the age of 25 years have a high school diploma while 78% of Black/African American individuals over the age of 25 years have a high school diploma. (U.S. Census, 2019)
3. From 2016-2018 Black individuals lost 2000 more years of life as compared to white individuals due to complex factors, such as lack of access to health care. (2016-2018 National Center for Health Mortality File)
4. The median household income for white families was \$76,487, while for Black/African American families, it was \$34,898. (SAIPE, 2019).

Fortunately, 2019, the Permanent Commission was established to examine racial disparities across all systems and specifically work to improve the status and outcomes for historically disadvantaged racial, indigenous, and tribal populations in Maine.¹

The work of dismantling structural racism cannot effectively be done without dedicated staffing and administrative support.

¹ [Summary \(maine.gov\)](https://www.maine.gov/legis/summary/)



Thrive2027 continues to seek ways to accelerate responses to racial inequities, of which supporting this bill is one step. If passed, LD 1034 will help advance the impact of the Permanent Commission and better support the Permanent Commission's vital work.

Thank you for your leadership and service.