



Testimony of Sarah Woodbury, Vice President of Programs and Policy, Defend Our Health
In Support of LD 1432 “An Act to Amend the Law Governing Racial Impact Statements” and LD
1948 “An Act to Amend the State’s Data Governance Program Regarding Proprietary Data”
Before the Committee on State and Local Government
February 6, 2024

Hello Senator Nangle, Representative Stover, and members of the Committee on State and Local Government. My name is Sarah Woodbury. I am the Vice President for Programs and Policy at Defend Our Health. Defend Our Health’s mission is to make sure that everyone has equal access to safe food and drinking water, healthy homes, and products that are toxic-free and climate friendly. Please accept this testimony in support of LD 1432 “An Act to Amend the Law Governing Racial Impact Statements” and LD 1948 “An Act to Amend the State’s Data Governance Program Regarding Proprietary Data”.

In the 130th legislature, LD 1610 was passed to help the state improve data and analysis capabilities to support equitable policies, public access, and engagement. This information is necessary to make sure that both the public and policy makers have a better understanding of how our population is changing over time and to provide information on how historically disadvantaged communities would be affected by proposed policy. LD 1948 and LD 1432 are the next steps to help operationalize the goals of LD 1610.

LD 1432 is limited in scope. It will require that OPLA provide demographic information including race, age, socioeconomic, gender, and location. For now, that information will be limited to both Health and Human Services committee and Health Insurance and Financial Services committee. This is necessary information to give lawmakers a full picture of how proposed laws will impact different racial groups. As with other analyses that OPLA staff provide, such as fiscal analysis, this will provide fact-based background information to help legislators make informed decisions before enacting policies that impact Maine people. Creating this type of program will provide more uniformity in in data collection, use, and publication across Maine state government. Much of the demographic information is siloed within various agencies, making it difficult for agencies to do the necessary work to promote transparency and provide access to services. LD 1432 creates steps to allow this data to be shared and published across state government.

LD 1948 directs the Department of Administrative and Financial Services to, as part of the February 2025 annual report to the Committee on State and Local Government, report back a statewide plan to fulfill the mandate of LD 1610 in consultation with the Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous & Tribal Populations and the Secretary of State. The information that will be provided will give lawmakers a full picture of how proposed laws will impact different racial groups across the state. We are lacking the necessary data to make good policy decisions that take into account the impacts on traditionally marginalized communities.



We need data about populations in Maine today to make informed policy decisions. In order to do this, we need to collect and track better information about Maine people. The type of improved demographic analysis and data publication that will be provided under LD 1948 will allow for greater public engagement in the policies and process that impact them on a daily basis.

Data drives policy. We need this information to make sure that Maine moves forward with just and equitable policies that benefit all Mainers. LD 1432 and LD 1948 are important policies that will help to make this happen. Therefore, we urge the committee to vote “ought to pass” on LD 1432 and LD 1948.