



**Testimony of Julia Brown, Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project  
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**

April 14, 2021

Thank you Senator Baldacci, Representative Matlack, and members of the Committee on State and Local Government, for the opportunity to submit this testimony in strong support of LD 1034, An Act To Provide Funding To Support the Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous and Maine Tribal Populations.

My name is Julia Brown and I am the Advocacy and Outreach Director at the Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project (ILAP). ILAP is Maine's only statewide organization that provides immigration legal aid to low-income immigrants. Each year, ILAP serves over 3,000 individuals statewide, coming from approximately 100 countries around the world. On behalf of ILAP, I would like to express our support for LD 1034.

It is critical that all Mainers, regardless of race, ethnicity, or country of origin, have the same opportunities for success. Unfortunately, available data shows that significant racial disparities exist in Maine. Maine's position last summer as the state with the worst COVID-19 racial disparities exposed how deeply systemic racism impacts Black and Brown Mainers.

Many members of Maine's immigrant community are Black and Brown, and in addition to the systemic racism that all people of color and indigenous and tribal populations face, they are also subject to anti-immigrant rhetoric and policy. 94 percent of ILAP's clients are Mainers of color, and we see the disparate impact of state laws on our clients, in areas as wide ranging as the criminal code, healthcare, or housing. We need to better understand these disparities to find solutions. We know that causes of disparity are structural, and we must explore structural changes to remove these disparities and achieve racial equity.

The Legislature has taken the important first step of creating the Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous and Maine Tribal Populations, which in a short time has already done incredible work in issuing an initial report and studying hundreds of bills. However, without sufficient funding, the Permanent Commission cannot continue its vital equity work that we need to confront the existing racial disparities in the state of Maine. If you are serious about dismantling systemic racism, you must vote in support of LD 1034 and support the work of the Permanent Commission. Thank you for your consideration.