



**February 2, 2021, Testimony of Julia Brown, Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project
In Support of LD 2, An Act To Require the Inclusion of
Racial Impact Statements in the Legislative Process**

Good afternoon, Senator Baldacci, Representative Matlack, and distinguished members of the Committee on State and Local Government. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of LD 2, An Act To Require the Inclusion of Racial Impact Statements in the Legislative Process.

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 nonprofit provider of immigration law and related legal aid to Maine's low-income residents. Each year, ILAP serves over 3,000 individuals statewide, coming from approximately 100 countries around the world. On behalf of ILAP, I ask the Committee to vote "ought to pass" on LD 2.

Maine has a thriving and growing immigrant community. Four percent of Mainers are immigrants, while seven percent of Maine residents are native-born U.S. citizens with at least one immigrant parent.

Many members of Maine's immigrant community are Black and Brown, and are subject to systemic racism as well as 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 criminal law, healthcare, or housing.

Structural racism and white supremacy are a central part of our criminal laws and system, and thus our immigration enforcement system as well. As you will hear and have heard from many experts, Black Mainers are much more likely to be arrested, convicted, and imprisoned than other populations – this extends to Black immigrants, who are more likely than other immigrants to be detained and deported due to an interaction with law enforcement.¹ For example, a bias-based traffic stop by police could lead in some cases to someone being separated from their family and deported to a country where they may face persecution.

While racial impact statements may be most clearly connected to criminal justice bills, COVID-19 laid bare the stark racial disparities in so many other areas of our society. Indeed, Maine's position last summer as the state with the worst racial disparities exposed how systemic racism impacts Black and Brown Mainers.

Some state laws purposefully exclude many Maine immigrants, like laws conditioning access to life-saving programs on immigration status. A racial impact statement would show that those laws gravely harm Mainers of color.

This bill is an important first step toward racial justice in Maine. I urge you to vote "ought to pass" on LD 2. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration and the opportunity to speak with you today.

¹ NYU School of Law Immigrants Rights Clinic and Black Alliance for Just Immigration, The State of Black Immigrants, Part II: Black Immigrants in the Mass Criminalization System, <https://www.sccgov.org/sites/oir/Documents/sobi-deprt-blk-immig-crim-sys.pdf>.