

State and Local Government Committee
c/o Legislative Information Office
Cross Building, Room 214
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: LD2: *An Act to Require the Inclusion of Racial Impact Statements in the Legislative Process*

Dear Senator Baldacci, Representative Matlack, and other members of the Committee on State and Local Government,

We represent the NASW Maine in support of LD2. The COVID pandemic has dangerously highlighted structural inequities; Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) have a higher prevalence of contracting COVID and are dying at a higher rate than white/Caucasian groups. Maine numbers are reported to be among the worst in the nation. Where 1 in 65 (1.38%) of Mainers are African American (World Population Review), yet:

- 1 in 20 confirmed or probable COVID cases are African American (maine.gov)
- 1 in 10 confirmed or probable COVID cases in Maine are BIPOC (maine.gov)
- 1 in 7 African Americans are incarcerated (prisonpolicy.org)
- 1 in 5 African Americans are homeless (mainehousing.org)

Poverty, low paying jobs, overcrowding, inadequate housing, and lack of access to food and health care are a few of the factors that contribute to inequities and higher COVID rates for African Americans and other BIPOC groups. It is a dangerous mix, where people in hourly or low-paying jobs choose not to leave work when they or loved ones are sick: being less likely to qualify for paid family medical leave and are at greater risk of losing their income or their jobs.

Julie has seen plenty of this in her work over the last 30 years in a Portland medical clinic with a high concentration of immigrants and people of color. It's hard not to absorb the anguish, fear, and sense of helplessness when patients can't work, put food on the table, get medications, or get help with daily living activities for a critically ill loved one because of their immigration status. It's frightful when one ethnic group resents another ethnic group for the perception of having a greater advantage and access to resources. Structural racism unintentionally pits one group against the other.

We urge you all to vote yes on LD2.

Respectfully submitted,

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Exact References:

World Population Review: <https://worldpopulationreview.com/states/maine-population>

Maine CDC: <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/epi/airborne/coronavirus/data.shtml>

Prison Policy Initiative: <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/profiles/ME.html>

Maine Housing: https://www.mainehousing.org/docs/default-source/housing-reports/2017-2018-state-fiscal-year-homeless-statistics.pdf?sfvrsn=eb32bd15_4