



February 2, 2021

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

I join you today on behalf of the Maine Women's Lobby. For over forty years, the Maine Women's Lobby has advocated for public policy which increases the health, wellness, safety, and economic security of Maine women and girls, with a focus on the most marginalized populations and communities.

We are here **in support of LD 2, "An Act To Require the Inclusion of Racial Impact Statements in the Legislative Process."** We thank Representative Talbot Ross for sponsoring this important bill.

At the Maine Women's Lobby, we prioritize gender-equitable public policy. Yet we know that gender equity is inextricably linked to racial equity. For instance, women of color (Black, brown, Indigenous, or any other women of color) experience more harmful outcomes from a range of public policies than white women or people of color in general. Just one example, from our [2020 Roadmap for Women's Economic Justice](#), shows that Black women in Maine make on average .66 cents for every dollar a white man makes (while white women make .83 cents)¹, and Black women in Maine are the least likely subpopulation to live with economic security² (the ability to meet their economic needs). Racism and sexism work together to create more barriers and produce more adverse outcomes among our neighbors and in our communities, which is why our organization prioritizes racial equity in our work.

LD2 seeks to find sustainable and manageable ways to help policymakers consider the effects of race and racism on the policy making process. Many policies are created without racist intent, but with impacts that disproportionately harm certain populations and communities (though of course policies such as red lining are created with a specific racist intent). LD 2 creates a checkpoint, an opportunity for policymakers and advocates alike to stop and assess: 'Are there effects or outcomes that might not be intended? Are there ways we can plan for or mitigate those effects?' This process of critical analysis is an important way that we can create systems that account for race, which can lead to less harmful outcomes over time.

We especially appreciate the pragmatic approach to this bill. It allows policymakers to work together to identify the best way to operationalize the effort, a pilot, and then time to fully integrate the system. We know that changes like this do not happen overnight or through a top-down approach. LD2 works within that reality and ensures that policymakers take the time and incremental steps to get this right.

¹ Lifetime Wage Gap Losses for Black Women Overall State Rankings: 2019. (2020, March). Retrieved from <https://nwlc-ciw49txgw5lbab.stackpathdns.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Black-Women-Overall-Lifetime-Losses-2020.pdf>

² Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW) and the Center for Social Development at Washington University. (2019). Accessed through the Institute for Women and Policy Research. Retrieved from www.iwpr.org.



Maine Women's Lobby

THE VOICE OF MAINE WOMEN

At the Women's Lobby, we believe that systems often operate with invisible practices and approaches that may not be intended – but which nevertheless have impacts that we must resolve. Only when we take the time to uncover and analyze the underlying beliefs of such practices can we make positive change. LD2 is a critical step toward improving the practices of policy making, to move toward more equitable outcomes for all Mainers, regardless of race or ethnicity.

Please vote 'yes' on LD 2.

Sincerely,

Destie Hohman Sprague, Executive Director
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