



Testimony Submitted to the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government
in support of

LD 2, An Act To Require the Inclusion of Racial Impact Statements in the Legislative Process

3 February 2021

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Senator Baldacci, Representative Matlack, and Distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government:

My name is Amy Winston and I live in Edgecomb. I am the State Policy Director at Coastal Enterprises, Inc. (CEI), and am testifying on behalf of CEI *in strong support* of LD 2, *An Act To Require the Inclusion of Racial Impact Statements in the Legislative Process*. As you know, LD 2 establishes in Maine a mechanism to study and pilot racial impact statements beginning in 2022, during the second regular session of this legislature. Based on the outcome of assessments completed on legislation proposed in up to four (4) relevant joint standing committees, recommendations will be made on how racial impact statements can be fully operationalized starting in 2023.

Racial Impact Statements are a powerful – and proven – tool to provide policymakers information and data to make fully informed and intentional decisions from the standpoint of promoting racial and ethnic parity. Making racial impact statements a part of the culture of the Maine State Legislature and Maine state government, enables/ensures lawmakers allocate resources in the most effective and efficient manner, while taking on institutional and systemic racism in our state.

This is important to CEI. As one of more than a thousand community development financial institutions (CDFIs) working for economic, social, and environmental justice nation-wide, we are dedicated to working in partnership with organizations, businesses, legislators and communities to advance equitable opportunity and create an economy that lifts all people. Nearly 80 percent of our business financing and advice goes to enterprises led by or creating opportunities for people with low incomes or in communities with low incomes.

CEI's President, Keith Bisson, is a member of Maine's Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous and Maine Tribal Populations. Established by the Legislature to examine racial disparities and improve outcomes for historically disadvantaged racial and tribal populations in Maine, the Commission has recommended that Maine "institutionalize a process to examine legislation through a racial equity lens."

It is the state's responsibility to carefully consider and implement Commission recommendations. Just as fiscal notes provide a fact-based analysis for legislators to understand and weigh the costs and benefits of a proposed bill, racial impact notes will enable our state to make informed decisions on bills according to their potential to prevent, exacerbate and ameliorate new and existing racial disparities. It is critical to



evaluate legislation beyond intent; and to fully anticipate and consider impacts and outcomes that may not or are not likely to be “color-blind” when enacting policies.

Furthermore, it is critical to diversify participation in government and engagement in the state legislative process. The use of racial impact statements will incorporate diverse experiences into the lawmaking process, by involving community based organizations led by people of color and scholars who are engaged with communities of color in the process of determining the methodology most appropriate for Maine to use in preparing racial impact statements and in the relevant data collection and analysis.

Currently, seven (7) other states utilize these tools. Many others are considering their use, and studying the scope, method, and appropriate sources for how their use and preparation. While racial impact statements primarily focus on reversing outcomes in the criminal justice and public safety sector, their application may be broader in order to redress longstanding educational and economic disparities that have limited achievement in minority communities due to individual and institutional racism and segregation in law enforcement and society. Today’s inequities are the cumulative effects of socioeconomic disadvantage accrued over generations, uneven resource allocation within and between communities, and biased decision making. Racial and ethnic and ethnic impact statements offer one clear way that policymakers can take action to address positively and proactively the factors that contribute to and perpetuate racial disparities.

Thank you for considering this testimony in support of LD 2. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions or would like additional information about CEI and our efforts to promote shared prosperity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Amy Winston", written in a cursive style.

Amy Winston
State Policy Director