

**PERMANENT COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF
RACIAL, INDIGENONS AND MAINE TRIBAL POPULATIONS**

**AN OVERVIEW OF MAINE'S GROWING CORONAVIRUS RACIAL DISPARITIES
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS**

June 30, 2020

Funding Suggestions

- COVID-19 disparities are only a symptom of a much broader and deadly disease: racism. While we propose addressing COVID-19 specifically with CARES Act funds, we must do so in a way that addresses the root causes of these disparities. Otherwise this will just be another crisis of many that has defined Maine's 200-year history, a state that has yet to live up to its full promise. When we find solutions that work for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color in Maine, we find solutions that work for everybody.
- This committee also needs to provide emergency support to Tribal nations in a way that honors sovereignty and is on a government-to-government basis.
- Community-based organizations (CBO's) and leaders from the Black, indigenous African American, and Latinx communities know the solutions needed to support and protect their communities; and they have been responding to this crisis since March. The legislature should direct CARES Act funding to local CBO's to respond to the urgent needs of Mainers of color who are being harmed and at greater risk from COVID-19. That response, designed by those who best know their communities' needs, should tear down barriers and create new ways for state government to work with the Mainers it is meant to serve.
- The legislature has *broad authority* to define what "necessary" means here. We need the appropriations committee to send a strong message that it will make investments using CARES Act funding in a way that is proportional to the people who are most directly impacted in Maine. The State has over \$1 Billion to invest in prevention, treatment, and recovery. We need you to send a strong message to the Executive Branch that: 1) investments are immediately needed and 2) we are going to make those investments using new tools that are fundamentally built on relationships and trust with directly impacted communities. These tools must include unrestricted funding and up-front investments instead of the usual ways the state does business which contribute to the disparities we have seen since the crisis began and continue to see today.
- Given the increased financial strain on municipalities to meet the needs of our state's most vulnerable residents through the General Assistance program as a result of the public health emergency, especially when it comes to people of color, we think it is imperative that the State use CARES Act funding to

reimburse municipalities for 100% of the expenditures made by municipalities to recipients above the General Assistance maximum levels of assistance, and to remove restrictions on General Assistance that are based on immigration status once and for all.

- The legislature should direct CARES Act funding to support emerging CBO's in the diverse communities of color that have a severe lack of social infrastructure in place to adequately respond to COVID-19 and any public health crisis. We know that we will be responding to COVID-19 for many months or even years to come and that existing and new public health threats will also disproportionately affect these same communities of color until we end the disparities caused by systemic racism. Therefore, it is imperative that we create a robust infrastructure that can adequately rise to the challenge of creating solutions without barriers for any Mainers. In order to ensure adequate resources are targeted where they are most needed, additional funds should be allocated to conduct community-led assessments of the assets and needs of the indigenous African American and Latinx communities as well as any other communities of color experiencing disparate impact from COVID-19 where there has not been a robust needs assessment completed. This investment is an urgent need to respond to the current crisis and should also include additional state funds to ensure these communities have adequate resources beyond December 31, 2020.