

## **Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous and Maine Tribal Populations**

In 2019, the Maine Legislature established the Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous and Maine Tribal populations. Since that time, the pressing need to address the impact of Structural Racism has only become more apparent. This independent entity has a mission to examine racial disparities across all systems and to specifically work at improving the status and outcomes for the historically disadvantaged racial, Indigenous, and tribal populations in the State. The Permanent Commission is empowered to advise all three branches of the Maine government.

To that end, the Permanent Commission embarked on an unprecedented process over the summer of 2020, collaborating with 55 state legislators, to assess legislation pending in the 129<sup>th</sup> Maine Legislature for possible impacts on racial disparities. Through that process, the Permanent Commission **identified ten areas of policy on which to focus. These areas are:**

- Basic Needs
- Basic Rights
- Criminal Justice
- Education
- Employment and Workers' Rights
- Health Care
- Housing and Homelessness
- Juvenile Justice
- Tribal Sovereignty
- Wealth and Income

The result of the Summer 2020 work was a set of bill recommendations for the 129<sup>th</sup> Maine Legislature, were they to reconvene for a special session. In addition, **they recommended the following guiding principles for members of the 130<sup>th</sup> Maine Legislature to adopt to effectively combat Structural Racism when law making:**

- Building awareness of racial disparities takes resources;
- Awareness alone is not enough;
- Financial and human resources must be allocated to eliminate the disparities caused by Structural Racism;
- Policies that are 'race-neutral' will ultimately maintain existing disparities;
- An adequate response requires a structural analysis;
- Developing solutions should be led by impacted communities; and

- Policies that affect tribal nations in Maine must be enacted in a government-to-government relationship.

Additional recommendations for the 130<sup>th</sup> Legislature include: investing in communities by building infrastructure and allowing for self-determination; allocating resources and establishing systems necessary to address health disparities; targeting the opioid crisis to address strain on tribal communities; and taking a bolder approach to criminal justice reform.

Finally, the Permanent Commission recommends the Legislature to institutionalize a process to assess the racial impact of legislation. Only through this type of analysis will Maine start to change the structural causes of racial disparities and live up to the notion that all people in Maine have an equal chance to thrive and live fulfilling lives.

You can read more about each of these recommendations and guiding principles in the Permanent Commission's [September 2020 report](#).