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LD 777 - An Act To Establish the Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial and Ethnic Populations

Dear Legislature,

I, Reverend Christina Sillari, am speaking on behalf of the Maine Unitarian Universalist Advocacy Network. Our racial, immigrant and native justice issue group supports LD 777.

The state of Maine was established and developed over hundreds of years through laws and practices that decimated native peoples and cultures and discriminated against people based on their race. This thread of oppression and violence often sanctioned by policy makers runs wide and deep in our collective culture. White supremacy is alive and well in Maine and continues to create unhealthy, unequal, and unjust personal and political actions that discriminate against people based on their race and culture.

Available data, shows that significant disparities in poverty, wealth, income, and rates of incarceration exist for African Americans, Native Americans, immigrants, and other non-white populations in our state. Allowing inequities like this to persist harms all of us.

Our ingrained systems of oppression make it very difficult for non-white people in Maine to access benefits, employment, housing, business ownership, education, and more.

LD 777 establishes a permanent commission to study socio-economic disparities among racial, indigenous, and tribal populations. This commission will examine these cultural and political disparities and with state agencies and impacted people work to improve the quality of life for impacted communities by creating opportunities and by suggesting legislation that may begin to unravel these archaic threads of oppression and violence our white state has been held hostage to for hundreds of years.

It is time for us to wake up as a state by acknowledging and repairing the ingrained and systematic oppression of non-white peoples. It is time to let our black and brown and native siblings know we see them and care about them and will use our government to support them. LD 777 is a powerful beginning.

As Unitarian Universalists, we affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of all people. We also believe all people are interconnected to one another and the earth. As people of faith, we see the oppression and discrimination against any peoples as immoral and unjust. We also understand when we separate or subjugate anyone we are harming the whole of humanity of which we are a part.

So please legislatures, do what is best for the state of Maine, for all of its people, make LD777 happen.

Gratitude and blessings,

Christina