Good morning, Senator Baldacci, Representative Matlack, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government. My name is Terence Miller, and I am the Advocacy Director at Preble Street, a nonprofit human service agency with over a dozen programs serving the most vulnerable people across the state of Maine. The mission of Preble Street is to provide accessible barrier-free services to empower people experiencing problems with homelessness, housing, hunger, and poverty, and to advocate for solutions to these problems. I am submitting this testimony on behalf of the agency in support of **LD 1610**.

Preble Street supported LD 2, which started the critical process of accountability for rectifying racial inequities in Maine's policies. Racism has inflicted irrevocable wounds on racial, ethnic, Indigenous, and tribal communities and populations. LD 2 helps eliminate structural racism from our lawmaking by assuring laws and policies take into consideration racial disparities. LD 1610 is a key piece of this urgent reform and will improve Maine's ability to collect, centralize, and use data to improve equity across the state's policies.

The inclusion of racial impact statements is an important step forward toward this critical goal, but the content of those statements require data to substantiate how Maine's policies will address racial inequities. At Preble Street, we see firsthand the impacts of structural inequality and discriminatory policies. A 2020 calculation of people accessing services in ten Preble Street programs showed that 22% are BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, or People of Color) – which is more than three times the percentage of BIPOC in the entire state. This data informs the agency that our policy and procedures need to address structural racism and inequities, and models how the critical racial equity data required by LD 1610 will inform policymakers with smarter data and analysis capabilities to support equitable policies, public access, and racial inequities.

LD 1610 is the first step in a process to create a careful, equitable, and meaningful data collection effort at the statewide level so we can begin to measure the disparities lived experience has taught us, and the pandemic has magnified to undeniable proportions. Racial equity data collection, centralization, and usage play an outsized role in helping us measure, compare, and synthesize data to address racial disparities by providing transparent analysis that can be used to end racial inequities in our policies.

Please vote to pass LD 1610.