Governor Mills Dedicates $50,000 to Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous and Maine Tribal Populations

June 25, 2020

Governor Janet Mills announced today that she will dedicate $50,000 in funding from the Governor's Contingent Account to support the work of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous and Maine Tribal Populations. The Governor has said that she hopes the Commission will help us more fully understand racial disparities in Maine and how we might begin to address them.

> *"Maine - despite our history of sending more troops than any other state and losing more lives in the fight to end slavery during the Civil War - still has our own painful history of racism dating back generations and our state is not immune to discrimination, injustice or inequality," said Governor Mills. "We must acknowledge our past and take steps to understand both the inequities that exist in Maine today and how we might begin to remedy them in the future. I do not have all the answers to what is a longstanding, systemic problem, but I am committed to learning and to improving our state in the months and years to come so that it can be a place of equal opportunity for all, including those of color. It is my hope that this funding can support the Commission as it begins its work, and I urge the Legislature to provide a long-term source of funding."*

Signed into law by Governor Mills last year, the Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous and Maine Tribal Populations seeks to promote, implement and coordinate programs that create and improve opportunities and incorporate the goal of eliminating disparities for historically disadvantaged racial, indigenous and tribal populations in Maine. However, the Commission was only appropriated $500 to support its work and requested additional funding from the Governor in a June 18 letter. In providing the $50,000 in one-time funding to help jumpstart the Commission, the Governor also called on the Legislature to provide a sustained annual source of funding for the Commission to be able to continue its work.

In Maine and across the country, racial and ethnic minorities have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19. Action is needed urgently to address these disparities and the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), in coordination with the Governor's Coronavirus Response Team, is committed to further steps to improve our response. DHHS Commissioner Jeanne Lambrew recently outlined the Department's work to address those disparities including expanding access to testing and health coverage; supporting individuals in quarantine or isolation; providing psychological first aid to first responders and social services to those impacted by the virus and supporting group home workers and parents during the pandemic. Read more about those efforts.

Get more information on the Commission, click. The Contingent Account is comprised of $300,000 in funding that is replenished annually and authorized for use by the Governor at her discretion in line with statutory requirements.

Credit

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