

Mark Tappan
Portland
LD 1202

Education and Cultural Affairs Committee
c/o Maine Legislature
State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Dear Honorable Members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share testimony with the Committee. I write to express my strong support for LD 1202 - An Act to Establish the African American Studies Advisory Council and Provide Funding to Support African American Studies. I speak as a proud Mainer and Professor of Education, Emeritus, at Colby College, where I taught for 31 years.

This legislation takes an essential and timely step toward ensuring that our students receive a more complete, inclusive, and accurate education. By creating an Advisory Council dedicated to supporting schools, educators, and the Department of Education, the bill provides critical guidance for integrating African American studies across curricula. Through its work—exploring educational materials, identifying curriculum resources, advising on content and professional development, and analyzing statewide data—the Council will help ensure that African American history, culture, and contributions are fully and thoughtfully represented in Maine classrooms.

Moreover, I commend the bill's additional measures, which create professional development opportunities for educators and establish a baseline understanding of the current implementation of African American studies. The potential addition of an endorsement or credentialing requirement through the State Board of Education further signals Maine's commitment to preparing educators to teach this important content skillfully and confidently.

Importantly, the bill also provides tangible resources—funding a new content specialist position and supporting outreach, curriculum development, and school grants. These investments will help schools meaningfully expand or introduce African American studies programs, enriching educational experiences for all students and promoting a deeper understanding of the diverse narratives that shape our shared history.

Passing this bill would not only strengthen education in Maine but would also affirm our collective commitment to diversity, equity, and historical truth. I urge you to vote in favor of this legislation and to continue advancing initiatives that foster a more inclusive and comprehensive education for Maine's students.

Thank you for your attention to this vital issue and for your leadership.

Sincerely,
Mark Tappan
Portland