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LD 1202 - An Act to Establish the African American Studies Advisory Council and Provide Funding to Support African American Studies

As a former Maine teacher (I taught for 14 years at Noble High School in North Berwick), a state finalist for Teacher of the Year in 2011, and the parent of two children raised and educated in Maine, I am writing to express my strong support for LD 1202.

At York High School, my children were lucky enough to have excellent history teachers who were thoughtful, thorough, and accurate in their teaching of American history, which means that they attended to the teaching of Black history. As a result, both of my sons emerged from their high school experience with a deep interest in history, curiosity about the experiences of others, and desire to make our future better than our past. They are white students, and learning about Black History was essential to their education.

This kind of teaching does not not happen everywhere but it should, because Black History is American history. Every state in the union is implicated in this country's history of slavery, and Maine is no exception. In order to fully understand how our state developed, and in order to think critically and wisely about how to shape our future, students must understand this past.

Black History is American history. Every state in the union has benefitted from the contributions of Black inventors, soldiers, scientists, artists, musicians, writers, scholars, athletes, entrepreneurs, financiers, politicians, activists and other leaders. When we study the examples of these national treasures, **every student is empowered, no matter their identity.**

As a former teacher, I know from long experience that it is essential to provide abundant opportunities for Black students in Maine classrooms to see themselves in the heroes and heroines that we uplift. When all Black students in Maine classrooms are empowered and inspired by what they find in school, the whole state (and country) is made stronger. As professor Wintre Foxworth Johnson wrote in Education Week in 2023, "an expansive exploration of Black history in elementary schools can be used to ignite children's ingenuity and investment in school." ([Black History Belongs in Early Elementary School](#), Education Week, Jan 2023).

It is essential to provide abundant opportunities for non-Black students in Maine classrooms to learn about the full spectrum of brilliance in our country. When these students go out into the world equipped to recognize brilliance in others, the whole state (and country) is made stronger.

Thank you for your time and attention. I hope you will do everything you can to pass LD 1202.

Kate Gardoqui