

Paulina Murton
Great Schools Partnership
LD 1202

Dear Co-Chair Senator Joseph Rafferty, Co-Chair Representative Kelly Murphy, and members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee,

Supporting African American studies for our students in Maine with the needed resources is critical to ensure a strong, inclusive and accurate education for all of our students. Black history is American history. Black students in Maine deserve a curriculum and learning experience in which they see themselves fully represented and valued.

All students in Maine deserve a curriculum and learning experience that provides them with a full and rich understanding of our country's diversity, history, and complexity. "Black History doesn't just encourage an appreciation and understanding of African American culture. It also closes the knowledge gap for all age groups and ethnicities." Satchel Harris, Black History is American History. We Should Teach It That Way. TNTP, February 2020.

A 2023 Education Week article further emphasizes that incorporating Black history into early education curricula is critical, stating that "Early elementary—grades K through 2—is a particularly fertile time for children to learn about and explore these stories, making elementary educators critical in raising students' awareness and working toward racial justice."

I strongly encourage you to move to establish an African American Studies Advisory Council and Provide Funding to Support African American Studies in Maine. Our state has an opportunity to be a leader in developing the highest quality learning experience for our students and to center and celebrate African American Studies.

Respectfully submitted,
Paulina Murton, Executive Director, Great Schools Partnership