



STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
23 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, ME 04333-0023

JANET T. MILLS
GOVERNOR

PENDER MAKIN
COMMISSIONER

April 22, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Senate Chair
Representative Murphy, House Chair
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and Distinguished Members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee:

I write on behalf of the Department of Education (DOE) to address all of the curriculum bills before the Committee today: LD 957 An Act to Integrate Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander History into the Statewide System of Learning Results, LD 1202 An Act to Establish the African American Studies Advisory Council and Provide Funding to Support African American Studies, and LD 1474 An Act to Strengthen the Teaching of Wabanaki Studies in Maine Schools. While each of these bills represent specific cultural histories that are at different levels of inclusion and integration in the Maine Learning Results and in local programs of study, we see some common implications.

Thank you for the opportunity share information about these bills. They focus on making sure students learn about the histories and experiences of groups that have often been left out of traditional instruction. The Maine Department of Education supports this goal and remains committed to helping schools offer an inclusive, honest, and accurate education. We appreciate the chance to provide context and raise a few considerations that may support implementation.

Each of these proposals calls for the inclusion of specific content into teaching and learning, and it's important to understand the distinction between learning standards and curriculum. The Maine Learning Results (MLR) are state standards that define broad expectations for what students should know and be able to do. Curriculum, however, the specific books, materials, lessons, and instructional approaches, is chosen at the local level by school boards. The Department does not mandate curriculum. Instead, we provide guidance, offer resources, and support local schools in interpreting and applying the standards.

We want to raise concern about the legislative approach taken in some of these bills, particularly those that revise Title 20-A, MRSA §4706. As more individual content requirements are added to statute, this section risks becoming an overly long and prescriptive list. This makes it harder to take an interdisciplinary approach and can shift the focus away from broader learning goals. It may not be the most effective way to support meaningful integration of these important histories and cultures into instruction.

There is also a process challenge to consider. Even if a bill passes that requires certain content to be included in the MLR, any change to those standards must still go through formal rulemaking. That includes public feedback, and final approval by the Legislature. This means a topic could be mandated by law but not adopted through rulemaking. If that happens, the Department is put in a difficult position, expected to implement something that hasn't been formally approved. This is one reason we recommend a more flexible approach that emphasizes strong standards, local control of curriculum, and high-quality support for schools.

Supporting schools in doing this work well also requires people. Our Wabanaki Studies Specialist is a good example. This role provides training, identifies instructional materials, and supports schools in using them effectively. It is ongoing, detailed work that relies on relationships, cultural understanding, and a deep knowledge of both history and teaching practice. That is why the Department supports the addition of permanent specialists focused on African American Studies and Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) history. These roles are not just about compliance, they provide critical outreach and expertise to help schools teach this content well.

In the case of LD 1474, we want to share that the Department, in partnership with our contracted Wabanaki advisors representing all five tribal nations in Maine, has already developed a free Wabanaki studies high school course. This course will be available to all high schools in Maine beginning in the 2025-2026 school year. Because of that, we believe any new funding would be more impactful if directed toward supporting schools in using this course, through professional learning, resource development, and implementation support, rather than creating another course that may duplicate what already exists.

Finally, we agree with the value of community involvement in developing educational resources. The Department already works with educators, cultural organizations, and outside experts to review and improve content. We believe continuing to draw on Maine's educators, in collaboration with partners, is a flexible and effective way to build and maintain inclusive learning materials. This approach allows us to adjust as needed and bring together a variety of voices without adding formal advisory groups in law.

We share the Legislature's commitment to a public education system that tells the full story of our past and present. We believe students deserve to learn about all the people who have shaped their communities, their state, and their country. At the same time, we ask the

Committee to consider how best to balance that goal with practical implementation, supporting schools with clear standards, strong local decision-making, and the people and resources they need to succeed.

To support the Committee's consideration of these bills, we have included the DOE informational letters for LD 2001 and LD 1664 from last session. We will be available to answer questions about LDs 957, 1202, and 1474 at their respective work sessions.

Beth Lambert

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Chief Teaching and Learning Officer
Maine Department of Education



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January 9, 2024

Senator Rafferty, Co-chair
Representative Brennan, Co-chair
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and Distinguished Members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee:

LD 1642, An Act to Strengthen the Teaching of Wabanaki Studies, proposes the creation of the Wabanaki Studies Commission to ensure the inclusion of Wabanaki studies in Maine's curricula. Additionally, it requires courses in Wabanaki studies for Maine's students and aspiring educators.

To date, the Maine DOE has made significant progress on the goal of preparing Maine educators with the resources they need to effectively teach Maine's students this important part of our shared history. At the Maine DOE, as part of the MOOSE (Maine's Online Open-Source Education) program, we have hired a Wabanaki Studies Specialist. During the 2022-2023 school year, the specialist's efforts were focused on creating lessons and resources regarding Wabanaki Studies available to educators, students, and parents through MOOSE's online, open-source format. The focus of the MOOSE modules and corresponding educator materials was determined through discussion with a broad group of Wabanaki tribal advisors, who continued to provide guidance and direction for the instructional designers throughout the entirety of the creation process. The specialist has met repeatedly with Wabanaki tribal leaders, curriculum coordinators and other educators throughout the state, and indigenous studies specialists in other states.

This school year, the specialist has polished and published seven MOOSE modules and corresponding educator resources in collaboration with educators and Wabanaki tribal citizens. They have also worked to expand the library of quality Wabanaki Studies resources available to educators on the newly designed Maine DOE Wabanaki Studies webpage and will continue to expand the webpage, as it grows as an ever-evolving database to meet the needs of Maine educators and match the growth of the Wabanaki as a people. Also available on the website is an evolving Traditional Knowledge Keepers directory, featuring interests, areas of expertise, and contact information for an array of Wabanaki traditional knowledge keepers. More educator's guides to teaching Wabanaki Studies in various grade levels and through various interdisciplinary lenses are currently being wrapped up and will be available by February of 2024 along with a variety of new lessons and resources. Also in the works are youth-focused videos from within Wabanaki communities and a Wabanaki Studies podcast for educators. Additionally, the specialist is working to put together hands-on kits that are both interdisciplinary and

standards-based and will be made available to all districts during the summer of 2024 with accompanying multimedia resources.

The Wabanaki specialist has presented at a variety of events for educators, including a number of content area associations. She is currently collaborating with the Maine Environmental Education Association (MEEA) to provide professional development around existing resources and meeting with educators from several districts to collaboratively work on curriculum, efforts that will continue into the upcoming months. At the start of the 2023-2024 school year, the specialist offered six grade-specific office hour sessions for those with inquiries related to teaching Wabanaki Studies in the classroom and has since offered open office hours monthly.

In the course of our regular Maine Learning Results review and revision, Wabanaki studies have been integrated into the Social Studies and Science standards. Wabanaki studies will be further integrated as regular review and revisions occur in other content areas.

Providing high quality resources and professional learning is the most meaningful way to effect change in teaching and learning. LD 1642 provides funding to support professional learning for Maine educators as well as to ensure the continued inclusion of Wabanaki Studies in any revisions of the Maine Learning Results. The Maine DOE foresees the following financial considerations, which includes compensation for the advisory services of people with lived experiences:

Bill Section	Content	Estimated Financial Impact
Sec. 5	20-A MRSA §4706, sub-§4: Wabanaki Studies must be included in the review of content standards: DOE shall, in a representative sample of schools, study the Wabanaki studies curricula at a minimum of every 5 years.	\$60,000 per year
Sec. 7	20-A MRSA c. 513: creation of teacher education programs in Wabanaki studies: DOE shall establish a teacher institute in Wabanaki studies.	\$500,000 per year

The Department will be available to provide additional information on LD 1642 and respond to any questions during the upcoming work session.

Sincerely,



Beth Lambert
Chief Teaching and Learning Officer



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January 11, 2024

Senator Rafferty, Co-chair
Representative Brennan, Co-chair
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and Distinguished Members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee:

LD 2001, An Act to Establish the African American Studies Advisory Council and Require Funding for African American Studies, proposes the creation of the African American Studies Advisory Council to act as a resource to school administrative units (SAUs) and educators on African American history in Maine. The Department of Education (DOE), in partnership with the Advisory Council, would be tasked with supporting SAUs to conduct internal audits of curriculum to ensure equitable representation of African American history, voices, and culture. Additionally, the DOE would establish and fund teacher education programs and teacher professional development programs in African American and Maine African American studies.

Since the passage of the 130th Legislature's LD 1664, An Act to Integrate African American Studies into American History Education, the Maine DOE has created significant resources to support the integration of African American studies into Maine schools' local curriculum.

In 2022, as required in LD 1664, the Maine DOE convened a volunteer advisory group. This group updated and revised the Maine DOE's resources on African American history listed on our website and made recommendations as to the continuation of the work. Also in accordance with LD 1664, during the regular scheduled Maine Learning Results (MLR) review and revision, African American studies was included in the review of the Social Studies and Science standards in 2023. As other standards are reviewed in 2024 and 2025, African American studies will be included in those revisions as well. The volunteer advisory group was essential to the process of including African American studies effectively and appropriately throughout the Maine Learning Results. The members of this advisory group were compensated for their time.

In the 2022-2023 school year, Maine DOE, as part of MOOSE (Maine's Online Open-Source Education), brought together Maine educators and community advisors to create the African Diaspora in Maine Learning Progression. This learning progression includes modules in four grade spans (prek-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-12) that explore age and developmentally appropriate topics such as community, Maine's relationship to slavery and enslavement, and historical and contemporary stories as told by Maine descendants of the African diaspora. Further systematic professional learning will be provided to the educator workforce once the standards revisions have been completed, with the integration of African American studies and the history of genocide. This is a planned priority for the 24-25 school year.

In addition to integrating African American studies into the Maine Learning Results and providing robust resources to educators in the field, the Maine DOE also provides support to SAUs in auditing their own

curriculum. This resource is located on the Maine DOE website and has been available since 2020. As referenced in our letter regarding LD 1642, we have followed a parallel path with integrating both Wabanaki and African American Studies into the MLR and developing resources and professional learning for the field. We have more robust offerings related to Wabanaki Studies because there is a dedicated specialist position within the DOE.

Providing high quality resources and professional learning is the most meaningful way to effect change in teaching and learning. LD 2001 provides funding to support professional learning for Maine educators as well as to ensure the continued inclusion of African American Studies in any revisions of the Maine Learning Results. The Maine DOE foresees the following financial considerations, which includes compensation for the advisory services of people with lived experiences:

Bill Section	Content	Estimated Financial Impact
Sec. 4	20-A MRSA §4706, sub-§4: DOE shall provide ongoing funding for the inclusion of African American studies in nationally accredited and state-approved teacher prep programs.	Public university budgets are determined by the institutions and legislature separate from the DOE. Further, the DOE has never provided funds to higher education institutions for specific programming.
Sec. 4	20-A MRSA §4706, sub-§4: DOE shall provide ongoing funding for the inclusion of African American studies in SAUs, including funding that SAUs can apply for to fund African American studies resources, such as coordinators.	\$7,200,000 per year
Sec. 5	§4706-A. African American Studies Advisory Council sub-§6. Duties.	\$39,000 per year
Sec. 6	20-A MRSA c. 513: creation of teacher education programs in African American studies: DOE shall establish and provide funding for a state teacher education program in African American studies. DOE shall provide funding for a nationally accredited teacher education program in African American studies.	Public university budgets are determined by the institutions and legislature separate from the DOE. Further, the DOE has never provided funds to higher education institutions for specific programming.
Sec. 6	20-A MRSA c. 513: creation of teacher education programs in African American studies: DOE shall provide funding for teacher professional development in African American studies.	\$275,000 per year
Sec. 6	20-A MRSA c. 513: creation of teacher education programs in African American studies: DOE shall establish a summer teacher institute in African American studies.	\$300,000 per year

The Department has been in discussion with the sponsor and are aware that an amendment is forthcoming. We will be able to speak to the amendment and provide additional information on LD 2001 and respond to any questions during the upcoming work session.

Sincerely,



Beth Lambert
Chief Teaching and Learning Officer