

TESTIMONY**In Support****LD 1664: “An Act to Integrate African American Studies into American History Education”****Grace Leavitt, President, Maine Education Association****Before the Joint Standing Committee on
Education and Cultural Affairs
May 10th, 2021**

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and esteemed members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs,

My name is Grace Leavitt. I am a Spanish teacher, National Board Certified, on leave from Greely High School while serving as President of the Maine Education Association. The MEA has nearly 24,000 members—faculty and staff in our pre-K-12 public schools, our institutions of higher education, and many dedicated retired educators.

I am writing on behalf of our members in support of LD 1664, “An Act to Integrate African American Studies into American History Education”.

The Maine Education Association generally is not in favor of curriculum mandates being passed by the legislature and especially if they are imposed without the resources, most particularly time, that would be needed in order to add them to what is already required. Even such important topics as some that are called for in several of the other bills coming before this committee today would be difficult to support without additional instructional time provided along with professional development and planning time and materials.

LD 1664, however, is different. The proposal seeks for an integration of African American studies into the already existing curriculum. The topic that LD 1664 seeks to integrate into current American history is one that has been overlooked or only superficially treated, if at all, in too many cases, not only leaving real gaps in students’ understanding of the history of our country, but possibly actually painting an inaccurate portrayal of many aspects of the history of the United States. This clearly has contributed to too many of us struggling to understand current issues and events and what has led to these events and brought our country to be where it stands today, with undeniable, glaring inequities and continuously growing economic disparities and opportunity gaps.

The MEA urges the Committee to vote 'ought to pass' on LD 1664. Our schools need to do what they can to incorporate missing components of this country's history in order to ensure that a more complete account of events be included in what is taught in our United States history classes.

Thank you for your time, and feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

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