



DATE: May 10, 2021
TO: Committee on Education & Cultural Affairs
FROM: Samantha Warren, UMS Director of Government & Community Relations
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RE: **LD 187, An Act To Require Education about African-American History and the History of Genocide, and LD 1664, An Act To Integrate African American Studies into American History Education**

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education & Cultural Affairs: I am writing today on behalf of the University of Maine System (UMS) to inform your consideration of LD 187, *An Act To Require Education about African-American History and the History of Genocide*, and LD 1664, *An Act To Integrate African American Studies into American History Education*.

Both of these bills propose that African-American and Maine African-American studies be incorporated into the existing content area standards of the Maine Learning Results. To support the delivery of the aligned instruction, the bills propose the establishment of volunteer advisory groups to develop and collect materials. In addition to scholars of African-American history and culture being included, the advisory group defined in both bills would include a representative of the University of Southern Maine's Gerald E. Talbot Collection.

As we hope you know, Gerald E. Talbot was the first African-American to be elected to the Maine Legislature, serving in the House of Representatives from 1972-1978. In 1995, USM conferred on Mr. Talbot an honorary Doctor in Humane Letters degree and dedicated a 250-year auditorium on its Portland campus in his name. USM is honored to house his collection, which includes his personal papers, records of his term in the Maine House and of his work with both the NAACP and the Maine State Board of Education. It is part of a larger African American Collection at the university that was inspired by Mr. Talbot and preserves the history of African American and other marginalized communities in Maine and beyond.

In 2019, USM named Lance Gibbs as the first Talbot Teaching Fellow. In this three-year fellowship, Dr. Gibbs serves as the primary academic point of contact for the African American and Talbot collections, working with USM faculty, staff and the community to encourage study and use of the collection – activities aligned with those proposed by LDs 187 and 1664.

Consistent with our own values of inclusive excellence and commitment to being a resource to Maine PK-12 schools and communities, USM and other UMS universities as relevant and appropriate welcome the opportunity to participate in the advisory groups proposed by these bills and any others advanced by this Committee for which we have specialized knowledge.

In the meantime, I invite you to virtually visit the first in a series of six new digital exhibitions from USM's African American Collection. "[We Exist: Evidence of Maine's Black Families from 1800 to the 20th Century](#)," specifically highlight images from the Talbot collection, and through photographs, writing and audio interviews, transmits the stories of the lived experiences of Maine's Black families. It was curated by Dr. Gibbs.

Please let me know if I can provide additional information on behalf of the UMS in advance of the work session.