

Deborah Bicknell  
Yarmouth  
LD 2001  
Jan. 11,2024

To Honorary Members of the Educational and Cultural Affairs Committee,

I am taking the time to write in favor of LD 2001 because as a citizen of the State of Maine I feel compelled to make sure my voice is heard in favor of this bill. I am not a member of a group submitting testimony or a power-block of people who have gathered to share their voice, in this case and in my written testimony, I am simply a citizen of the State of Maine.

One of the reasons I am taking time to write in favor of this LD is that I believe one of the cornerstones of change-making in our systems toward more a more equitable society is through education. Whether one believes in a more equitable society depends on personal value systems and beliefs, however in the public domain, in the domain of public systems such as our educational system, I believe we owe it to current and to future generations to provide the most robust and equitable education possible; to me this means updating and integrating the untold and untaught stories of African American history and present day experience. There is so much to say about why this matters, one simple reason is because it happened and to honor what has happened means we have a chance to become more whole as people and as Americans. As writer and philosopher George Santanyana said “those who do not learn history are doomed to repeat it. I am guessing someone’s grandmother also said this, however the sentiment behind it is what matters most.

I am in favor of LD 2001 and request that it ought to pass. I cannot imagine how more education could be harmful to anyone, quite the contrary, I know that expansion of our minds and of our understanding has the potential to create powerful and positive change in ourselves, in our school communities, in our country and in the world. This bill calls for scholarly advisory capacity as well as funding and I support this endeavor. As we have seen without these support systems, actions to incorporate African American history and experience is often taken by singular teachers where and when they feel compelled and are able. This bill hopefully will begin to support a more systemic movement toward offering a more full educational experience for all Maine students.

We are all better people and better citizens when we know our history, when we honor through more honest inclusion the deep and often minimally told history of African Americans and as well as present-day teachings, writings and offerings from African American scholars, historians, writers and educators.

I offer my testimony in respect of all of you and your service to the State of Maine.

Sincerely,  
Deborah E. Bicknell