



**Testimony of Maine Public Health Association in Support of:  
LD 2001: An Act to Establish the African American Studies Advisory Council and Require Funding for  
African American Studies**

Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs  
Cross Building, Room 208  
Thursday, January 11, 2024

Dear Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. My name is Rebecca Boulos. I am a resident of South Portland and executive director of Maine Public Health Association. MPHA is in support of LD 2001: “An Act to Establish the African American Studies Advisory Council and Require Funding for African American Studies.”

MPHA is the state’s oldest, largest, and most diverse association for public health professionals. We represent more than 700 individual members and 60 organizations across the state. MPHA works to optimize the health of people and places in Maine through advocacy, education, partnerships, and public health workforce development. We are not tied to a national agenda, which means we are responsive to the needs of Maine’s communities, and we take that responsibility seriously.

Everyone should have access to accurate information about history and culture; information that contributes to a well-informed and healthy citizenry. Providing education about the history of Black people in Maine, including Maine’s role in the slave trade and the devastation on Malaga Island, are a critical part of that history. Establishing an African American Studies Advisory Council and appropriating sufficient state funding and staff support contributes to a solid foundation for students to better understand historical contexts and contemporary challenges to health equity and wellbeing.

We are very supportive of this legislation and encourage you to please vote “Ought to Pass.” Thank you for your consideration.