

Leslie Manning
Bath
LD 1667

Friends, I am Leslie Manning of Bath and a member of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) speaking today on behalf of the Friends Committee on Maine Public Policy. I am a former president of the Maine Council of Churches and a former Clerk, or chair, of the Governance Committee of Quakers in New England.

Our faith recognizes "that of God" in every person, and that we all are worthy of dignity and respect. Our testimony, or spiritual value, of Equality requires us to treat everyone, regardless of status, race, ethnic identity or cultural heritage as we would be treated ourselves. It is in that spirit that I urge you to support LD 1667, so that our place names are reflective of our state's increasingly welcoming character and an indication that once, in the words of Dr. Maya Angelou, "when we know better, we do better.*"

It is not ours to determine what is offensive to others; if we are told by another that it is offensive, that is reason enough to work to correct it. Slurs and racial epithets have no place in our hearts, on our maps or in our gazeteers; that is not who we are or intend to be.

Words matter; names matter. When we refuse to acknowledge that our words intentionally inflict harm on others, we perpetuate that harm. We must commit to change that, here and now; such work is necessary and long overdue. LD 1667 works to address that.

Friends in Maine have long supported the efforts of Indigenous People to self determination and full enfranchisement, including support for the Maine constitutional amendment in 1954 that allowed Native citizens the right to vote in our state; support for the teaching of Wabanaki history in our schools and my home Quaker Meeting of Durham is currently providing social justice enrichment resources to elementary and early education volunteer teachers in a pilot program to promote an anti-bias classroom.

"Anti-bias curriculum is an approach to early childhood education that sets forth values-based principles and methodology in support of respecting and embracing differences and acting against bias and unfairness."

From Teaching for Change

Please note that we not only introduce injustice but we let children know they can do something about it.

If we have that expectation of our children, can we not commit to modeling it ourselves? Thank you for your time and your service to all the people of Maine. I am happy to answer questions, to the extent of my ability.

*"Do the best you can until you know better. When you know better, do better."