



Testimony before the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee

**LD 2001: An Act to Establish the African American Studies Advisory Council
and Require Funding for African American Studies**

January 11, 2024

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and Members of the Committee:

I am Rev. Jane Field, Executive Director of the Maine Council of Churches. The Council has seven mainline Protestant member-denominations and two associate member congregations who represent more than 400 local churches in Maine with over 50,000 parishioners in their care. I am testifying on behalf of the Council **in SUPPORT of LD 2001.**

In the sacred texts in which our seven traditions are rooted, Hebrew and Christian scripture, two of the central values are truth-telling and solidarity with the marginalized and oppressed. LD 2001 would help Maine make progress toward both.

When Maine's students and teachers have a deeper understanding of and appreciation for the history and contributions of Black Americans, we will be better able to build an accepting, more cohesive, and inclusive community for tomorrow. Telling the truth, both about the long history of oppression and the long history of resilience and resistance of Black Americans of African descent is an essential element in a rigorous education program that engenders cultural awareness and respect.

Neglecting to incorporate African American studies sends a clear message of disrespect for a group of people who have lived and worked in the United States (*and in Maine*) for hundreds of years, voted as citizens, fought in consequential American wars, and significantly contributed to American culture.

We at MCC have been troubled by attempts to erase Black history from schools and classrooms. We affirm the need for Maine's students and teachers to learn the history of *all* of America's people. To do otherwise threatens to reverse our country's progress toward creating a more perfect union, as our founders called for in the Constitution.

We urge you to ensure that Black voices and stories are not erased from statewide and local school curricula by voting **OUGHT TO PASS** on LD 2001.

Jane Field
Maine Council of Churches
LD 2001

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