

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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131st MAINE LEGISLATURE

FIRST SPECIAL SESSION-2023

Legislative Document

No. 2001

H.P. 1279

House of Representatives, May 25, 2023

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

Reference to the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs suggested and ordered printed.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robert B. Hunt".

ROBERT B. HUNT
Clerk

Presented by Speaker TALBOT ROSS of Portland.
Cosponsored by Senator DUSON of Cumberland and
Representative: BRENNAN of Portland, Senators: HICKMAN of Kennebec, LIBBY of
Cumberland, RAFFERTY of York.

1 **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:**

2 **Sec. 1. 5 MRSA §25007, sub-§1, ¶B**, as enacted by PL 2019, c. 457, §2, is
3 amended to read:

4 B. Seek public input by conducting public hearings annually to obtain information
5 about the needs of and solutions to the problems faced by historically disadvantaged
6 racial, indigenous and tribal populations; ~~and~~

7 **Sec. 2. 5 MRSA §25007, sub-§1, ¶C**, as amended by PL 2021, c. 398, Pt. RRRR,
8 §1, is further amended to read:

9 C. Beginning March 1, 2022, and annually thereafter, report to the Governor and the
10 Legislature concerning the work and interests of the commission, including a summary
11 of public comments obtained pursuant to paragraph B; and

12 **Sec. 3. 5 MRSA §25007, sub-§1, ¶D** is enacted to read:

13 D. Provide staffing assistance to the African American Studies Advisory Council
14 established in Title 20-A, section 4706-A, subsection 1.

15 **Sec. 4. 20-A MRSA §4706, sub-§4** is enacted to read:

16 **4. Funding for African American studies.** The department shall provide ongoing
17 funding for the inclusion of African American studies in nationally accredited and state-
18 approved teacher preparation programs and school administrative districts, including
19 funding that school administrative districts can apply for to fund African American studies
20 resources, such as coordinators.

21 **Sec. 5. 20-A MRSA §4706-A** is enacted to read:

22 **§4706-A. African American Studies Advisory Council**

23 **1. Advisory council established; purpose.** The African American Studies Advisory
24 Council, referred to in this section as "the advisory council," is established within the
25 Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous and Tribal Populations,
26 established by Title 5, section 12004-J, subsection 19, to serve as a resource to educators,
27 school administrative units and the public by offering educational online and on-site
28 programming related to the State's African American history.

29 **2. Membership.** The advisory council is composed of 13 members who have
30 experience in African American studies. The membership of the council consists of the
31 following:

32 A. One member who is a representative of an African American civil rights
33 organization, appointed by the President of the Senate from a list provided by a
34 statewide African American civil rights organization;

35 B. Two members with expertise in teaching African American studies, at least one of
36 whom is a scholar in African American studies, appointed by the President of the
37 Senate from a list provided by an organization that supports the teaching of African
38 American studies;

39 C. One member appointed by the President of the Senate from a list provided by the
40 administrator of the Gerald E. Talbot Collection at the University of Southern Maine;

- 1 D. Four members appointed by the commissioner as follows:
- 2 (1) An elementary school teacher;
- 3 (2) A middle school teacher;
- 4 (3) A high school teacher; and
- 5 (4) A curriculum director with experience in teaching African American studies;
- 6 E. One member appointed by the Chancellor of the University of Maine System who
- 7 specializes in teacher education with experience in teaching African American studies;
- 8 F. The State Archivist; and
- 9 G. Three members of the public, appointed by the Speaker of the House, with
- 10 demonstrated participation in African American community organizations.
- 11 **3. Chair; subcommittees.** The advisory council shall select a chair from among the
- 12 members of the advisory council. The chair is authorized to appoint subcommittees.
- 13 **4. Terms.** A member is appointed for a term of 3 years and may be reappointed.
- 14 **5. Vacancies.** In the event of a vacancy in the membership of the advisory council, the
- 15 vacancy must be filled in the manner of the original appointment for the remainder of the
- 16 term.
- 17 **6. Duties.** The advisory council shall:
- 18 A. Assist school administrative units and educators in the exploration of a wide range
- 19 of educational materials and resources relating to African American studies;
- 20 B. Identify materials and resources for implementing African American studies;
- 21 C. Involve other knowledgeable organizations and individuals able and willing to
- 22 assist with the duties described in paragraphs A and B, including, but not limited to,
- 23 museums and educators;
- 24 D. Make recommendations to the department regarding:
- 25 (1) African American studies curricula;
- 26 (2) Funding of African American studies in school administrative units;
- 27 (3) African American studies courses that count toward teacher certification; and
- 28 (4) Implementation of teacher education programs and teacher professional
- 29 development in African American studies;
- 30 E. Work with the department to develop a process to support and enable a school
- 31 administrative unit to conduct an internal audit of that school administrative unit's
- 32 curriculum to ensure an equitable representation of African American voices and an
- 33 accurate historical account of African American history and culture. Audits conducted
- 34 pursuant to this paragraph must occur at least once every 2 years; and
- 35 F. Submit a report on the progress of the implementation and status of curriculum
- 36 audits conducted pursuant to paragraph E to the joint standing committee of the
- 37 Legislature having jurisdiction over education matters no later than February 1st
- 38 annually.

1

SUMMARY

2 This bill establishes the African American Studies Advisory Council to serve as a
3 resource to educators, school administrative units and the public by offering educational
4 online and on-site programming related to the State's African American history. The
5 advisory council is required to work with the Department of Education to develop a process
6 to support and enable a school administrative unit to conduct an internal audit of that school
7 administrative unit's curriculum to ensure an equitable representation of African American
8 voices and an accurate historical account of African American history and culture. Audits
9 must occur at least once every 2 years. The advisory council is established within the
10 Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous and Tribal Populations, which
11 is required to provide staffing and assistance to the advisory council.

12 The bill directs the department to establish and fund teacher education programs and
13 teacher professional development programs, including a summer teacher institute, in
14 African American studies and Maine African American studies. The bill also requires the
15 department to provide ongoing funding for the inclusion of African American studies in
16 teacher preparation programs and school administrative districts, including funding that
17 school administrative districts can apply for to fund African American studies resources,
18 such as coordinators.