

*LR 2236*

*AN ACT TO ESTABLISH A MAINE AFRICAN AMERICAN  
HISTORY AND CULTURE COMMISSION*

Rep. Rachel Talbot Ross has introduced proposed legislation to the Maine Legislature that will be of real interest to Maine's African American community and Maine citizens who value our state's long-standing commitment to inclusion and the advancement of human rights.

If adopted, LR 2236 (see attached) would create a commission of Maine citizens who will work together over the course of one year to produce a set of recommendations that will allow us to:

1. Undertake more research, scholarship, and engagement in Maine's African American experience;
2. Identify a process, timeline, and budget for incorporating Maine's African American history into our curriculum;
3. Examine what is needed to invest in programs and activities that support the collection, preservation and indexing of African American oral and written histories.

The Legislature's Education and Cultural Affairs Committee will hold a public hearing on the bill in the coming weeks and will then pass along its recommendation to the full Legislature.

This is our opportunity to enhance learning about African American history in Maine and to work for justice and equity for all people of color! Therefore, we need you to do three things:

1. Attend a public rally on (date, & time) at (location).
2. Prepare and deliver written testimony at the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee Public Hearing on (date & time) at (location) OR AT A TIME AND PLACE TBD
3. Reach out to your elected representatives, and others you know, to ask for their support of LR 2236—especially those who serve on the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee: Sen. Rebecca Millet - Chair, Sen. Brownie Carson, Sen. Matthew Pouliot, Rep. Victoria Kornfield - Chair, Rep. Michael Brennan, Rep. Jan Dodge, Rep. Gary Drinkwater, Rep. Dick Farnsworth, Rep. Justin Fecteau, Rep. Henry Ingwersen, Rep. David McCrea, Rep. Shelley Rudnicki, Rep. Heidi Sampson.

African Americans have been subjected to a uniquely tortuous history: from the slave trade and slavery through the underground railroad, abolitionism, the Civil War, and Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation; then from the Jim Crow era through civil rights legislation, mass incarceration and police violence. Yet they have contributed enormously to literature, the arts, sports, entertainment, science, and business. 2019 marks the 400<sup>th</sup> year since the enslavement of Africans began on our soil in Jamestown in 1619 (1638 in Massachusetts/Maine). 2020 marks the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the creation of an independent State of Maine. So it is the right time to create a commission which spans these two anniversary years and analyzes the slave trade as the foundation of our agricultural/economic system; explores the correlation between African slavery

and the enslavement of indigenous people prior to 1619; and supports equity and restorative justice.

A team of black and white Maine citizens is working together to support LD 2236 and other pieces of legislation being proposed to advance racial equity and inclusion within our state. Please feel free to contact any of us, and we'd love to have you join with us:

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