



TO: The Honorable Joseph Rafferty
The Honorable Michael Brennan, Co-Chairs
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

DATE: 5/4/2023

RE: LD 618 - An Act to Eliminate Critical Race Theory, Social and Emotional Learning and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion from School Curricula

Good morning Senator Rafferty and Representative Brennan.

My name is Allyson Gardner. I'm a resident of Fryeburg. I am here today on behalf of the League of Women Voters of Maine. I am testifying in opposition on LD 618.

The League of Women Voters of Maine is a nonpartisan political organization that has been working for over 100 years to encourage informed and active participation in government, to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and to influence public policy through education and advocacy. We never support or oppose any political party or candidate.

LD 618 is likely to have a negative effect on educational outcomes, student learning, and the ability of graduates to be competitive in the wider world upon graduation. In addition, the bill is counter to the League's overall mission of encouraging participation in government, understanding public policy issues, and supporting a broad education.

The keys to an informed electorate and a functioning democracy are that all citizens receive a broad and comprehensive education. That education should provide students with the skills to thoughtfully analyze real-world issues and evaluate different policies and proposed solutions. These skills are foundational and need to be initially acquired and then applied in the K-12 education environment. In addition, it is important to understand the context of how different groups arrive at their proposed policies and solutions to the issues of the day.

The environment and context for learning needs to consider not only an understanding of how a particular group arrived at their position in today's society but also how others may have gotten to theirs. It doesn't matter whether the groups are defined by shared socio-economic characteristics, ethnicity, political affiliation, race, or along any other dimension; everyone's journey to where they are today needs to be broadly understood.

To establish an outright ban on understanding selected parts of our shared histories, as proposed in this bill, is to decrease that understanding and deny some aspects of history.

Much of historical context is objective—events either happened or they didn't. It is important to know these things. Likewise, it is important to understand, to the extent possible, the motivations of various

groups when they proposed policies and solutions to problems of the day. By denying a culturally inclusive history curriculum, this bill would deny a comprehensive education.

Because we recognize that excellence in education for all students is a core value and prime goal of Maine as a state, we recommend that Bill 618 *not* be passed.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions from the Committee.

Allyson Gardner
Director of Maine Students Vote