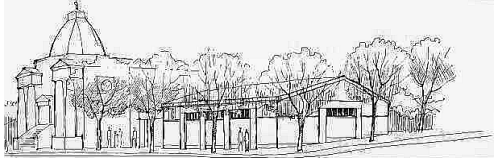


CONGREGATION BETH ISRAEL
1888



BILL SIEMERS, Rabbi

BRIAN KRESGE, President

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Members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
Clerk Samuel Baker
c/o Legislative Information Office
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

To the members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs,

Congregation Beth Israel, the oldest Jewish congregation in Maine, recently learned of two acts before the Legislature:

- LD 215 / HP 150 – An Act To Require Instruction on the History of Genocide and the Holocaust
- LD 187 / SP 74 – An Act to Require Education about African-American History and the History of Genocide

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel famously said of marching with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., “When I marched in Selma, my feet were praying.” Jews and African-Americans have a storied history of working together for civil rights and equality. Deeper than that, we share a heritage of subjugation and the horror of genocide.

As such, our Congregation believes that while requiring genocide and Holocaust education is pivotal, inclusion of African-American history as mandatory curriculum in Maine schools is just as crucial.

We believe that Maine will greatly benefit from expanding our curriculum to include many of the minority experiences present in our state. We humbly ask members of this Committee to embrace the full language in Legislative Document No. 187, and see it passed to the Legislature for vote.

Representing the Congregation and its Board of Directors, we thank you for your consideration of this request,

Bill Siemers
Rabbi

Brian Kresge
President