

Maulian Bryant
Wabanaki Alliance
LD 14

Testimony in support of LD 14 An Act to Provide Indigenous Peoples Free Access to State Parks Sponsored by Senator Craig Hickman

Submitted by Maulian Bryant, Penobscot Nation Tribal Citizen, Executive Director of the Wabanaki Alliance

Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker, and members of the Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry,

My name is Maulian Bryant. I am a Penobscot Nation Tribal Citizen and Executive Director of the Wabanaki Alliance. We were founded in June 2020 by the federally recognized nations in our homelands now called Maine, the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians, Mi'kmaq Nation, Passamaquoddy Tribe at Motahkmikuk, Passamaquoddy Tribe at Sipayik, and Penobscot Nation. The Wabanaki Alliance was created to educate the people of Maine about the need for restoring the recognition of tribal sovereignty of Wabanaki Nations.

The Wabanaki Alliance supports LD 14 An Act to Provide Indigenous Peoples Free Access to State Parks. We thank Sen. Hickman for introducing the bill and the multiple legislators who have co-sponsored the bill. We testified in support of the version of this bill in a previous legislature and we thank the Senator for bringing this effort back after it did not quite make it through the legislative process after passage in both chambers. My testimony today will largely reflect our testimony from last session.

We see this bill as a way for the Maine State Government to acknowledge the Wabanaki connection to our homelands. Honoring that connection is beneficial to not just our people and communities but it helps to address and heal historical trauma.

The displacement of Wabanaki Peoples and theft of our land involves far more than an economic loss. It disrupted our connection to so much of our culture and identity. LD 14 represents an aspect of the growing movement to recognize the Wabanaki relationship to the land and for governments and institutions to take steps to restore Wabanaki access and stewardship to our traditional territory. By removing the cost to access some of these lands we can help ensure that all Indigenous people can work towards restoring their connection and empowering their journey.

Recently Minnesota passed a law granting to the citizens of the 11 federally recognized tribal nations residing there free access to its state parks. Maine can keep stride with states honoring Indigenous presence and healing.

The Wabanaki Alliance urges the Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry to vote ought to pass on this bill.