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**Testimony of the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association  
in Support of  
LD 14 - *An Act to Provide Indigenous Peoples Free Access to State Parks***

February 11, 2025

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Good afternoon Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker, and members of the Committee. My name is Heather Spalding and I'm deputy director of the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA). MOFGA appreciates the opportunity to testify in support of LD 14 - *An Act to Provide Indigenous Peoples Free Access to State Parks*, which provides that a member of a federally recognized Indian nation, tribe or band is not required to pay a fee for admission to or use of any state-owned park or historic site managed by the State.

MOFGA is committed to working towards Wabanaki prosperity, tribal sovereignty and food sovereignty. We recognize that Wabanaki food sovereignty is a critical part of MOFGA's mission to transform our food system. We also recognize the interdependence of all aspects of a healthy food system, and the importance of Wabanaki knowledge, stewardship and leadership in creating a regenerative food system that supports all of us.

What is now Maine has supported Wabanaki people and a system of hunting, fishing, and gathering grounds through time immemorial. Before European colonization, these grounds were accessible by the Wabanaki for their enjoyment and sustenance. Offering free admission to state parks for indigenous people is a step forward to correct the many injustices that indigenous people have suffered.

Though this bill doesn't touch on food sovereignty, I would like to suggest that consideration be given to indigenous people's access to hunting, fishing and gathering in ways that can mesh with the public's enjoyment and safe recreation in the state's park system. Thank you for your consideration of this legislation.

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***About MOFGA:*** *A broad-based community, MOFGA is transforming our food system by supporting farmers, empowering people to feed their communities, and advocating for an organic future. MOFGA certifies 537 organic farms and processing operations representing more than \$120 million in sales. We're working hard to create opportunities for Maine's next generation of farmers. Each of these farmers is a Maine businessperson for whom economic health and environmental health are interdependent. While MOFGA envisions a future of healthy ecosystems, communities, people, and economies sustained by the practices of organic agriculture, we attribute our success to collaboration and outreach to growers across the management spectrum.*

