

Erika Bjorum
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Honorable Members of the Maine Judiciary Committee:

I am writing in support of LD 1970, An Act to Enact the Maine Indian Child Welfare Act. The current challenge to the federal ICWA law, now on the docket of the U.S. Supreme Court, has demonstrated the broad and diverse support for this essential federal law that protects Native children's connection to their tribes and communities, as well as recognizes the role the removal of Native children has played as a tactic of colonization over many generations – and continuing into our lifetimes and the present day through disproportionately high rates of removal for Native children.

More than 500 tribal nations (including all the tribes in Maine) and more than 60 tribal organizations have signed amici briefs in support of the federal law.

Eighty-seven members of Congress, including both Maine senators and Representative Pingree have formally added their names in support of ICWA.

Twenty-three states, including Maine, have also signed on in support.

A 2023 legal review of challenges to federal ICWA law from 2017 to 2022 recommends, among other things, that “states must pass their own ICWA laws to enshrine the Act's protections into state law” (Fort, K. E., & Smith, A. T. (2023). The Indian Child Welfare Act during the Brackeen years. *Juvenile and Family Court Journal*, 74, 9– 36. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jfcj.12231>).

The Maine-Wabanaki State Child Welfare Truth and Reconciliation made the following recommendation: Respect tribal sovereignty and commit to resolve and uphold federal, state and tribal jurisdictions and protocols at both the state and local levels. Upholding and strengthening Maine's commitment to ICWA is certainly following that recommendation.

I fully support this legislation and urge you to pass it. Thank you.