

**Friends Committee on Maine Public Policy
James Matlack, Clerk
5 Duck Pond Road
Camden, Maine 04843**

Testimony in Support of LD 1970: An Act to Enact the Maine Indian Child Welfare Act

May 31, 2023

To the Honorable Senator Anne Carney (chair), Honorable Representative Matt Moonen (chair) and Distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary:

My name is Anne D. Burt. I live in Edgecomb. Today I am submitting testimony on behalf of the Friends Committee on Maine Public Policy (FCMPP), of which I am a long-time member, and the Maine Council of Churches. Our two organizations urge your Committee **to vote unanimously OUGHT TO PASS on LD 1970.**

The Friends Committee is a statewide network of Quakers who are focused on public policy issues in Augusta. For several decades we have addressed issues of concern to the Wabanaki peoples in Maine and worked to improve and strengthen Tribal-state relations. The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) is a member denomination of the Maine Council of Churches. MCC is an ecumenical coalition of seven mainline Protestant denominations who have 437 congregations in Maine with 55,000 members in their care.

Quakers have long learned and passed down our history with Indigenous peoples through stories and paintings, focusing on such events as the signing of William Penn's peace treaty with the Lenape, as our forebears settled onto Lenape homeland in what is now Pennsylvania. It has only been recently that Quakers have begun to unearth and examine our shameful participation during the 19th and 20th centuries in the nationwide genocide effort to remove Native children from their families and culture and place them in boarding schools to "civilize" them, all the while sowing the seeds of the intergenerational trauma that is still experienced in tribes today.

What we now know — knowledge gained largely from courageous victims who have shared stories of their painful childhood boarding school and non-Native foster family experiences (See Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth & Reconciliation Commission report: *Beyond the Mandate/Continuing the Conversation*) and from state and Tribal child welfare workers and others who have worked together to advocate for systemic changes in child protection procedures and public policy — is that the well-being of Native children is inextricably linked to their connectedness to their culture, their land, and their Tribal community. And it is this knowledge that underlies the specific child protection procedures and standards established in the 1978 federal Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) on which this state ICWA bill (LD 1970) is modeled. These child protection procedures have been considered the "gold standard" of child protection policies for 40 years.

Why at this time should Maine join 12 other states in codifying the federal ICWA protections at the state level? A case heard and to be decided this month by the Supreme Court could weaken or destroy these standards that protect all Native children including Wabanaki children, families, culture and sovereignty.

Maine was first in the nation in creating the Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth & Reconciliation Commission which heard and documented testimony from Wabanaki people traumatized by a child protection system that removed them from their family and culture, and testimony from state and Tribal child welfare workers. From their report we know how important it is to codify the ICWA procedures and standards that will continue to support the well-being of Wabanaki children, their families, and their nations.

We strongly urge the Judiciary Committee to vote unanimously OUGHT TO PASS on LD 1970.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony and your service to Maine.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne D. Burt

Member, Friends Committee on Maine Public Policy

Anne Burt
Edgecomb
LD 1970

Friends Committee on Maine Public Policy
James Matlack, Clerk
5 Duck Pond Road
Camden, Maine 04843

Testimony in Support of LD 1970: An Act to Enact the Maine Indian Child Welfare Act

May 31, 2023

To the Honorable Senator Anne Carney (chair), Honorable Representative Matt Moonen (chair) and Distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary:

My name is Anne D. Burt. I live in Edgecomb. Today I am submitting testimony on behalf of the Friends Committee on Maine Public Policy (FCMPP), of which I am a long-time member, and the Maine Council of Churches. Our two organizations urge your Committee to vote unanimously OUGHT TO PASS on LD 1970.

The Friends Committee is a statewide network of Quakers who are focused on public policy issues in Augusta. For several decades we have addressed issues of concern to the Wabanaki peoples in Maine and worked to improve and strengthen Tribal-state relations. The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) is a member denomination of the Maine Council of Churches. MCC is an ecumenical coalition of seven mainline Protestant denominations who have 437 congregations in Maine with 55,000 members in their care.

Quakers have long learned and passed down our history with Indigenous peoples through stories and paintings, focusing on such events as the signing of William Penn's peace treaty with the Lenape, as our forebears settled onto Lenape homeland in what is now Pennsylvania. It has only been recently that Quakers have begun to unearth and examine our shameful participation during the 19th and 20th centuries in the nationwide genocide effort to remove Native children from their families and culture and place them in boarding schools to "civilize" them, all the while sowing the seeds of the intergenerational trauma that is still experienced in tribes today.

What we now know — knowledge gained largely from courageous victims who have shared stories of their painful childhood boarding school and non-Native foster family experiences (See Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth & Reconciliation Commission report: Beyond the Mandate/Continuing the Conversation) and from state and Tribal child welfare workers and others who have worked together to advocate for systemic changes in child protection procedures and public policy — is that the well-being of Native children is inextricably linked to their connectedness to their culture, their land, and their Tribal community. And it is this knowledge that underlies the specific child protection procedures and standards established in the 1978 federal Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) on which this state ICWA bill (LD 1970) is modeled. These child protection procedures have been considered the "gold standard" of child protection policies for 40 years.

Why at this time should Maine join 12 other states in codifying the federal ICWA protections at the state level? A case heard and to be decided this month by the Supreme Court could weaken or destroy these standards that protect all Native children including Wabanaki children, families, culture and sovereignty.

Maine was first in the nation in creating the Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth & Reconciliation Commission which heard and documented testimony from Wabanaki people traumatized by a child protection system that removed them from their family and culture, and testimony from state and Tribal child welfare workers. From their report we know how important it is to codify the ICWA procedures and standards that will continue to support the well-being of Wabanaki children, their families, and their nations.

We strongly urge the Judiciary Committee to vote unanimously OUGHT TO PASS on LD 1970.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony and your service to Maine.
Respectfully submitted,
Anne D. Burt
Member, Friends Committee on Maine Public Policy