

Troy Jordan
South portland
LD 1970

My name is Troy Jordan, and I live in South Portland.

The legacy of the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 (ICWA) was one I grew up hearing about, understanding its transformative impact on American Indian and Alaska Native families. Today, it strikes me how that story resonates with our situation in Maine, as we face the question of legislating similar protection at the state level with LD 1970. There are many good reasons to support this legislation, but I'll focus on three key points:

Firstly, our history is one of systemic failure in providing equitable child welfare services to our indigenous community, the Wabanaki. Before ICWA's enactment, Maine had one of the highest rates of indigenous child removals in the nation. The 2015 report from the Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth & Reconciliation Commission is sobering – in 1972, Wabanaki children were 62.4 times more likely to be removed from their homes than non-Native children in Aroostook County. I remember hearing those stories, the pain, and the loss echoing through generations, a cruel result of the biased child welfare practices of that time.

Secondly, it's disheartening that even after ICWA's enactment, a disproportionately higher rate of Wabanaki children in Maine are taken into foster care than non-Native children. We can, and must, do better. ICWA, with its “gold standard” in child welfare policy, was designed to protect our indigenous children and families, keeping them connected to their culture, extended family, and community – factors proven to be protective and crucial to their wellbeing.

Finally, LD 1970 is not just about supporting Wabanaki communities; it's about Maine joining hands with 12 other states that have recognized the importance of ICWA protections at the state level. We've seen support from nearly 500 tribes, hundreds of supporters, and 87 members of Congress, including our own U.S. Senators, Susan Collins and Angus King, and Rep. Chellie Pingree. With ICWA's constitutionality currently under review by the U.S. Supreme Court, it's crucial that we act at the state level to safeguard our Wabanaki children and families.

As a Mainer, I believe that we can uphold the “gold standard” in child welfare policy, and protect the rights, culture, and sovereignty of the Wabanaki people. And so, I fully support the enactment of LD 1970.