

## **Testimony in Support of LD 1970 “An Act to Enact the Maine Indian Child Welfare Act”**

May 30, 2023

Dear Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and honorable members of the Committee on Judiciary,

My name is Claire Horne and I'm a resident of Appleton, ME. I am writing today to encourage you to support LD 1970 “An Act to Enact the Maine Indian Child Welfare Act”.

The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) of 1978 was crafted by elected officials to address vast inequities within child welfare and adoption practices. In that year alone, 25% to 35% of all Indigenous children were removed from their homes by state child welfare and private adoption agencies, according to the National Indian Child Welfare Association. It is estimated that 85% of those children were placed outside of their families and communities, even when fit and willing relatives were available. Maine was no exception - in fact the rates for removal of Wabanaki children were the second highest in the country in 1972 when the rate of removal for Wabanaki children was 62.4 times higher than the statewide rate for non-Native children in Aroostook county. The Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth & Reconciliation Commission report holds record of these confronting and egregious realities. I hope these facts and context can start to paint an image of why ICWA was and continues to be essential to Indigenous tribes, families, and children across the country, especially for the Wabanaki tribes here in Maine. ICWA is considered the “gold standard” in child welfare policy and practice according to a coalition of 18 national child advocacy organizations. It's hard to overstate the importance that ICWA has in protecting Wabanaki children, families, sovereignty and culture.

Today, I think it's time that Maine codified ICWA on the state level, as has been done already in 12 other states. The protections provided by ICWA are so numerous that we cannot risk them being lessened, changed, or taken away by the Supreme Court. We know ICWA protections were needed in Maine back in 1978, and we know that they are still needed in Maine to continue the push to keep Wabanaki children connected to their extended families, communities, and culture. We cannot risk losing the hard-earned progress over the past 40 years. Please support LD 1970.

Sincerely,  
Claire Horne

Claire Horne  
Appleton  
LD 1970

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