

Ann Dodd-Collins
Portland
LD 1970

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

My name is Ann Dodd-Collins, and I live in Portland. Today I urge your Committee to vote unanimously OUGHT TO PASS on LD 1970, An Act to Enact the Maine Indian Child Welfare Act.

By enacting LD 1970, Maine would join 12 other states that have acted to codify ICWA protections on the state level. This would protect Wabanaki children, families, culture, and sovereignty if the U.S. Supreme Court decides in June to weaken or destroy protections that have been known as the “gold standard” of child welfare policies for 40 years. It would serve the best interests of Wabanaki and other Native American children by keeping them connected to their culture, extended family and community.

In 1978, according to the National Indian Child Welfare Association, nationwide 25% to 35% of all Indigenous children were removed from their homes by state child welfare and private adoption agencies. As many as 85% of those children were placed outside of their families and communities — even when fit and willing relatives were available. A 2015 report of the Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth & Reconciliation Commission, stated that Wabanaki children continued to be placed in foster care in similarly higher rates than non-Native children prior to ICWA’s enactment in 1978. This is unconscionable. As a parent, the thought of children being ripped from their families and their communities breaks my heart. We must protect the children of the Wabanaki nations in Maine, especially since we cannot depend on the U.S. Supreme Court to do so.

Please support LD 1970 and vote OUGHT TO PASS.