



SIERRA CLUB

MAINE CHAPTER

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To: Members of the Joint Committee on the Judiciary
From: Becky Bartovics
Date: May 31, 2023
Re: **Testimony in Support of L.D. 1970 "An Act to Enact the Maine Indian Child Welfare Act"**

Dear Senator Carney, Representative Moonan and Members of the Judiciary Committee

I am submitting the following testimony on behalf of Sierra Club Maine, representing over 22,000 supporters and members statewide. Founded in 1892, Sierra Club is one of our nation's oldest and largest environmental organizations. We work diligently to amplify the power of our 3.8 million members nation-wide as we work towards combating climate change and promoting a just and sustainable economy. To that end, we urge an "ought to pass" report on LD 1970, An Act to Enact the Maine Indian Child Welfare Act, sponsored by Representative Donna Bailey.

Maine has had a dismal history of Indigenous child removal from their families to be placed outside of their own communities. The cultural disruption is second only to familial separation. While there have been some improvements over time, as recently as 2013 Indigenous children were five times more likely to be removed from tribal homes than non-native children. Maine has participated in supporting adoption of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and filed briefs in support. But now it is time to codify Maine's embracing the ICWA in this session of the 131st legislature.

You were able to hear the State of the Nations presentation to the Maine Legislature earlier this year.¹ The compelling nature of the stories of native families and urgent need for support from the State of Maine is obvious. Maine's Truth and Reconciliation Report urges changes to be made. And some have been accomplished.² However the threat that the US Supreme Court could alter the ICWA when it takes the *Brackeen v Haaland* case in June brings into bold relief the need to pass this legislation.³

Please vote "ought to pass" on LD 1970 and codify Maine's commitment to indigenous children's future in this State. Please make this right.

Sincerely,

Becky Bartovics
Volunteer Chapter Leadership
Sierra Club Maine Chapter

¹ <https://wabanakialliance.com/state-of-the-tribes-2023/>

² https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/mainewabanakireach/pages/1584/attachments/original/1617238958/Full_TRC_Report_-_July_2015.pdf

³ https://sct.narf.org/caseindexes/brackeen_v_bernhardt_lower_courts.html