

Carol Horne
Appleton
LD 1970

Members of the Judiciary Committee of the Maine State Legislature:

I am writing to you in support of LD 1970: "An Act to Enact the Maine Indian Child Welfare Act," sponsored by Rep. Donna Bailey, D-York.

I am a resident of Maine, and am not a member of one of our tribes in Maine. My interest in this bill is in the interest of supporting the health and welfare of children of the Wabanaki tribes in our state of Maine.

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 its review of ICWA's constitutionality in the Brackeen vs. Haaland case that is expected to be decided in June to weaken or destroy protections that have been known as the "gold standard" of child welfare policies for 40 years. I side with Maine's U.S. Sens. Susan Collins and Angus King and Rep. Chellie Pingree, who are among the 87 members of Congress who signed the "friends of the court" brief supporting ICWA in the pending U.S. Supreme Court briefing.

In Maine, according to a 2015 report of the Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth & Reconciliation Commission, Wabanaki children were placed in foster care in similarly higher rates than non-Native children prior to ICWA's enactment in 1978. For Aroostook County in 1972, the rate of removal for Wabanaki children was 62.4 times higher than the statewide rate for non-Native children. The rates for Maine were the second highest in the nation at that time. And, even after ICWA's enactment, a disproportionately higher rate of Wabanaki children in Maine are taken into foster care than non-Native children. ICWA serves the best interests of Wabanaki and other Native American children by keeping them connected to their culture, extended family and community, which are proven protective factors, helping to support their resiliency for continued health and happiness in their lives.

In short, the ICWA is uniformly supported by health officials and elected officials. It makes good sense for all children and families in Maine. I am hoping that you all consider supporting this bill.

Respectfully,

Carol Horne, resident of Appleton, Maine