



Maine Council for English Language Arts  
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Subject: Testimony in Support of LD 1642 - An Act to Strengthen the Teaching of Wabanaki Studies in Maine Schools

Dear Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs,

We are writing to express our strong support for LD 1642, "An Act to Strengthen the Teaching of Wabanaki Studies in Maine Schools." As the collective voice of the Maine Council for English Language Arts (MCELA), an affiliate of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), we believe that this bill is a crucial step towards fostering a more inclusive and culturally rich educational environment for the students of Maine.

The proposed legislation establishes the Wabanaki Studies Commission, which plays a pivotal role in ensuring the integration of Wabanaki studies into educational curricula across the state. We are particularly pleased with the directive to the Department of Education to establish and fund teacher education programs in Wabanaki studies.

To support the effective implementation of LD 1642, we propose the creation of an advisory council comprising various stakeholders, including educators, students, members of Wabanaki tribes, and representatives from organizations such as the Maine Association of School Librarians, Maine Humanities Council, Maine Writers and Publishers Alliance, Maine Arts Commission, Maine Association for Middle Level Education, and the Maine Council for Social Studies. This collaborative effort will facilitate networking and the sharing of resources among different groups, ultimately bolstering the success of Wabanaki studies in Maine schools.

Furthermore, we strongly advocate for funding to produce a revised edition of "Maine Speaks," last updated in 1996, incorporating the content of LD 1642. This updated resource can serve as a comprehensive guide for teachers, providing essential information and lesson plans related to Wabanaki studies. Additionally, it would be beneficial to explore opportunities for collaboration with other groups, such as book clubs, institutes, and microcredentials, to enhance professional development for educators.

In Section 5.4, focusing on providing resources, funding, and training for current teachers, we suggest incentivizing teacher involvement through micro-credentials. Like

the Dawnland–Maine Indian History initiative, the Department of Education could cover the costs for teachers to obtain these micro-credentials. This could be expanded to include a variety of subjects within Wabanaki studies, such as ELA, History, and more, ensuring a holistic approach to incorporating this vital curriculum.

We believe LD 1642 is a progressive and necessary step towards a more inclusive education system in Maine, and we urge you to support this crucial legislation. Thank you for your time and dedication to the betterment of our state's educational system.

Sincerely,

Patti Forster, President  
Maine Council for English Language Arts (MCELA)