

To: Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

From: Becca Ferguson

Date: January 9th, 2024

Re: Testimony in support of LD 1642: An Act to Strengthen the Teaching of Wabanaki Studies in Maine Schools

---

Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Becca Ferguson and I am writing to urge you to vote Ought to Pass for LD 1642, An Act to Strengthen the Teaching of Wabanaki Studies in Maine Schools.

A report published by the Abbe Museum, ACLU of Maine, Maine Indian Tribal-State Commission and the Wabanaki Alliance in 2022 found that many Maine schools have not implemented Wabanaki Studies consistently and appropriately in their curriculum, despite the fact that the Wabanaki studies law was passed back in 2001. The Wabanaki Alliance has supported LD 1642 and I am writing as an ally to encourage you to listen to the Wabanaki leaders in our state who are urging you to pass this bill. LD 1642 provides concrete steps to ensure that we as a state have the resources to properly teach Wabanaki studies including permanent funding for resources, materials and continuing education for teachers and opportunities for teachers to acquire Wabanaki studies content knowledge and instructional skills.

In college I took a class called “Wabanaki History of Maine” and had the opportunity to travel to various tribal lands here in Maine and learn from Penobscot, Passamaquoddy, Micmac and Maliseet people about their land, lives, and history. Each of these Wabanaki tribal members urged my classmates and I to educate ourselves and those around us about Wabanaki history. Since this time, I’ve learned how little people in Maine know about Wabanaki history despite the Wabanaki studies law passed in 2001 and this is something we can begin to change with LD 1642.

We are on Wabanaki land here in Maine, and it is important that the youth of the next generations know this and learn the history and present day stories of the Wabanaki peoples who have been living on this land for far longer than us. I urge you to vote Ought to Pass for LD 1642 to ensure that in the future we do a better job of acknowledging our colonial history and listening to the voices of our Indigenous leaders here in Maine.

Thank you for your consideration

Becca Ferguson