

Audrey Hufnagel
Damariscotta
LD 1642

To: Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

From: Audrey Hufnagel

Date: January 9, 2024

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

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and Members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Audrey Hufnagel and I am writing as a high school student and an activist in support of LD 1642 An Act to Strengthen the Teaching of Wabanaki Studies in Maine Schools.

In 2001, the Maine legislature passed a bill requiring that students in grades K-12 receive Wabanaki studies education in school, including about Wabanaki history, culture, government and relationships with other governments. However, a 2022 study showed that despite this requirement, Wabanaki studies is often not taught consistently and appropriately in Maine schools. LD 1642 would help to alleviate this issue by providing resources and training for educators to teach Wabanaki studies, as well as setting up the Wabanaki Studies Commission to ensure Wabanaki studies are included in school curriculum.

I write in solidarity with the Wabanaki people and as a student who wants to see more Wabanaki studies in schools. In my experience, I received minimal education about Wabanaki government and culture, and Wabanaki history was only mentioned briefly when learning about the history of Maine. The Wabanaki have been living on and protecting the land in this place we now call Maine since long before colonizers came to the Americas. We need better education about their history, traditions and government systems, as well as a history of oppression and mistreatment by colonizers, in order for students to truly understand the history of the place we call home.

In order to implement these changes in Maine schools, teachers need the support and training to properly teach Wabanaki studies. LD 1642 will provide the necessary training and resources to support educators to better implement Wabanaki studies in Maine schools. I therefore urge you to vote ought to pass on LD 1642.