

Wayne Cobb
Friends Committee on Maine Public Policy
LD 14

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FRIENDS COMMITTEE ON MAINE PUBLIC POLICY

Committee on Tribal-State Relations
129 Chesterville Hill Road Chesterville, ME 04938

From: Wayne Cobb, 147 Allen Avenue #34, Portland ME 04103

Member, Friends (Quaker) Committee on Maine Public Policy

RE: LD 14, An Act to Provide Indigenous Peoples Free Access to State Parks

Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, my name is Wayne Cobb. I reside in Portland, and I submit this testimony on behalf of the Friends (Quaker) Committee on Maine Public Policy, specifically our Tribal-State Relations Committee. I speak to express our strong support for LD 14: An Act to Provide Indigenous Peoples Free Access to State Parks. The Friends Committee wishes to thank Sen. Hickman for introducing this bill and the multiple legislators who have co-sponsored it.

Before European arrival, all of what we now call Maine was Wabanaki homeland. Quakers in Maine have long supported the inherent rights of the Wabanaki to self determination and the need for equitable treatment by the state. It is incumbent upon us as a faith-based advocacy group to support the Indigenous peoples of this land.

If LD 14 is passed, it will signify Maine State Government's respect for the unique connection that the Wabanaki have to the lands and waters within our state's borders. Passage would signal progress toward acknowledging the Wabanaki connection to the lands and waters, and honor the value of Wabanaki access and stewardship in traditional Native territory.

Just a few examples of state-owned or managed properties of historical importance to Wabanaki people are: the land on which the Colonial Pemaquid State Historic Site lies, which was home to Native peoples dating back at least seven thousand years; Fort Pownall in Stockton Springs, one of three significant forts that the British built on the major rivers in the Northeast to cut off the Native waterways to the ocean; and campgrounds within The Penobscot River Corridor, which contains over 60 miles of river access and 70 miles of lakeside, features that provided sustenance and facilitated canoe travel for the Wabanaki from time immemorial.

Enabling free access for members of federally recognized Indian Nations or Tribes in Maine to historic sites, camping areas and beaches managed by the state is an important step in the process of land justice, a step toward recognizing the long history of the Wabanaki and their ongoing connection to all the lands and waters of our state. The Friends Committee on Maine Public Policy urges the Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry to vote unanimously ought to pass on LD 14.