

Jessika Sheldrick
Sebago, Maine
LD 1474

To: Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
From: Jessika Sheldrick from Sebago, Maine. Principal
Date: April 19, 2025

RE: Testimony in support of L.D. 1474, "An Act to Strengthen the Teaching of Wabanaki Studies in Maine Schools"

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs,

My name is Jessika Sheldrick and I am a 26 year Maine educator. I currently serve as a teaching principal at Otisfield Community School. I am testifying in support of L.D. 1474, "An Act to Strengthen the Teaching of Wabanaki Studies in Maine Schools," because I believe this work is important to knowing more about Maine's past, present, and future and how Wabanaki knowledge is important to the learning for adults and students alike.

In the fall of 2024, our school started planning a Wabanaki Day for our school. It was something we quickly realized that wasn't going to be able to be planned quickly, as there is so much to know and learn.

I am happy to share that by working closely with our district liaison, Sarah Timm, as well as Bri Lolar, we were able to host our Wabanaki Day in April. We were so thankful that Chris Sockalexis and Miquansis Sapiel, both from Wabanaki nations, also joined us to help our students learn more about Wabanaki through storytelling and music. Chris played his drums and told stories while Miquansis sang and told stories. It was beautiful. All of the adults felt the day was powerful and many kept saying, "I had no idea....." We learned so much.

Our students also shared their thankfulness for the day and what they learned. A pre k student shared, "I loved clapping while Chris played his drums." While a fourth grader shared, "The stories were so interesting. I learned so much about Maine from the stories."

We are very much looking forward to figuring out how this work can continue at our school. However, all students and staff should be afforded the opportunity to learn and grow with a better understanding of who Wabanaki are and their contributions to Maine and beyond. Powerful day for everyone; in fact, one of the volunteers thanked me for allowing her the opportunity to be part of the day. She expressed that it was one of the better school experiences she has had.

For these reasons, I respectfully encourage you to support L.D. 1474. Thank you for your time and consideration of my testimony.

Sincerely,
Jessika Sheldrick

*I just want to share the positive impact Wabanaki studies have helped staff through written testimony. I do not wish to speak aloud. :)