

Carey Hotaling  
Freeport  
LD 1474

To: Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs  
From: Carey Hotaling, 14 Walnut Trail, Freeport, ME 04032  
Date: 4/20/2025

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 Carey Hotaling, and I live in Freeport, Maine. I am testifying in support of L.D. 1474, "An Act to Strengthen the Teaching of Wabanaki Studies in Maine Schools."

I was a classroom teacher when LD 291, the bill requiring that all Maine Schools teach Wabanaki Studies was passed in 2001. At that time, I was thrilled that Maine was finally planning to integrate this Traditional Ecological Knowledge into curriculums for our schools. Previously, I worked for the Harraseeket Project, a collaborative effort of Maine Audubon Society and the Freeport Historical Society funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities. The purpose was to explore relationships between the Harraseeket River Estuary and the humans who had depended upon it through history. In addition to the Western Ecological Knowledge, I learned and taught how the Wabanaki used, respected, and lived on the estuary for thousands of years. These two cultural perspectives had commonalities and significant differences that taught participants about their own ecological ideas and their own dependence upon the environment.

In 2001, I saw Falmouth, where I taught, and other neighboring communities attempt to integrate Wabanaki Studies in a few scattered ways. There was no funding for professional development, knowledge building for our curriculum, or ongoing support to integrate this new topic. These programs statewide faded into the background for 20 years until now. Brianne Lolar, Wabanaki Studies Specialist at the DOE, has done a superb job of helping to bridge the gap between what teachers know about the teaching of Wabanaki Studies, and supporting ongoing education through lesson creation and sharing resources. We need to continue the momentum that this position has helped to spark, and to provide quality Wabanaki Studies resources for all.

I applaud your committee for recognizing the urgent need to fund contracted Wabanaki advisors, ensuring Wabanaki voices are honored statewide. This support is especially critical for developing and implementing mini-courses for ongoing teacher professional development. Schools need this now. It's time to align our funding with our values. Districts also need a consistent, permanent position to support the creation and implementation of high-quality Maine programs.

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

Sincerely,

Carey Hotaling, Maine State Lead for SubjectToClimate