

LD 1474

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

My name is Diane Oltarzewski and I am a registered voter residing in Belfast. Since the original bill mandating Wabanaki Studies to be taught in Maine Schools was passed in 2001, we have been waiting for this long-overdue dream to become a reality.

Too many families, too many children in our state are still unaware that Indigenous people even exist in Maine, let alone inhabit five communities today on their original territory. And we have before us the remarkable progress already achieved in the Portland School District, and how Wabanaki studies curricula there have been enhanced substantially, creatively, to the great benefit of all the students.

Along with other interested folks in Belfast, over the last decade, when we would talk with teachers we were amazed to find that these studies were rarely happening, or if individual teachers took the initiative and introduced the subject, still there was little consistency or well-thought-out progression of age-appropriate material. We must not fall short this time!

Please, let's get this done statewide. Passing LD 1474 (after 24 years of delay) will make possible a really enriched social studies program for all grades.

Thank you!