

Olivia Griset
Brunswick
LD 1474

Testimony in Support of LD 1069: An Act to Strengthen the Teaching of Wabanaki Studies in Maine Schools

Submitted to the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Olivia Griset, 31 Woodside Rd. Brunswick, Maine 04011

April 21, 2025

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

My name is Olivia Griset, and I am a parent of two middle school students in Brunswick. I am writing today in strong support of LD 1069, “An Act to Strengthen the Teaching of Wabanaki Studies in Maine Schools.”

As a parent and a resident of Maine, I care deeply about the education all of our children receive—one that is truthful, inclusive, and reflective of the place where we live. Maine is home to the Wabanaki Nations—the Maliseet, Micmac, Passamaquoddy, and Penobscot peoples—who have lived on this land for thousands of years and continue to shape its past, present, and future.

More than 20 years ago, the Maine Legislature wisely passed the Wabanaki Studies law, requiring the teaching of Wabanaki history and culture in Maine schools. Yet, despite the law’s passage, implementation has been inconsistent, with many students across the state receiving little to no meaningful instruction in Wabanaki Studies.

This is not just a missed educational opportunity—it’s a disservice to all Maine students. Understanding the full history and cultural richness of our state helps young people develop critical thinking, empathy, and a more accurate and complete view of the world. When we leave out Indigenous voices, we tell an incomplete and misleading story of Maine.

In the last year the Department has hired a pilot Wabanaki Studies Specialist who has been working for the Maine DOE creating very important resources and training for Maine teachers to support them in teaching Wabanaki Studies. The teachers at my children’s school, Brunswick Junior High School, attended a training with Brienne and my children were able to get a very comprehensive unit on Wabanaki Studies. I was so grateful they had this experience and it would not have been possible without the Wabanaki Specialist at the DOE.

LD 1069 is a necessary step toward fulfilling the promise of the original law. By requiring the Department of Education to assess implementation and support school districts in integrating Wabanaki Studies into their curricula, and ensuring the DOE has a permanent Wabanaki Studies Specialist position and funding for Wabanaki advisors to review content development and support teachers will continue the critical work towards every student in Maine—not just a fortunate few—having access to this essential learning.

As a parent, I want my children—and all children in Maine—to grow up with an education that honors truth and fosters understanding. I urge you to support LD 1069 and help ensure that Maine schools live up to this responsibility.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to Maine students.

Sincerely,
Olivia Griset
Brunswick, Maine