

To: Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

From: Adele Drake, 62 Upper Oak Point Road, Winterport, ME 04496, Visual Arts Teacher at Hampden Academy

Date: April 21, 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 Adele Drake, and I am a high school visual arts educator at Hampden Academy in Winterport, Maine. I am testifying in strong support of L.D. 1474, "An Act to Strengthen the Teaching of Wabanaki Studies in Maine Schools," because I believe that every student in Maine deserves a full and truthful education about the land they live on, the history they inherit, and the Indigenous peoples whose knowledge, resilience, and culture continue to shape our state today.

In my role as an educator, I have collaborated with Wabanaki advisors and the Department of Education to develop curriculum modules that integrate Wabanaki environmental wisdom, cultural traditions, and contemporary issues into public school education. I have seen firsthand the transformative impact when students engage deeply with Wabanaki perspectives through art, environmental studies, and history. Through projects like "The Art of Allyship" and "A River Runs Through," students not only learn about Wabanaki culture but also develop a sense of shared responsibility, empathy, and environmental stewardship.

Strengthening the requirement and support for Wabanaki Studies is critical because current implementation is uneven and inconsistent across districts. Without stronger accountability and clearer structures, too many students graduate without a meaningful understanding of the Wabanaki nations, their contributions, and their contemporary presence. L.D. 1474 addresses this gap by ensuring that Wabanaki Studies are integrated with the same seriousness and rigor as other essential content areas, providing professional development for teachers, and fostering authentic partnerships with Wabanaki people and communities.

When we teach Wabanaki Studies with integrity, we are not just teaching history — we are honoring living cultures, promoting reconciliation, and helping build a future rooted in respect and truth. We are giving our students the tools they need to become informed, empathetic citizens of Maine and the world.

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

Sincerely,
Adele Drake

adele drake
winterport
LD 1474

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