

Mark Tappan
Portland
LD 1474

Education and Cultural Affairs Committee
c/o Maine Legislature
State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Dear Honorable Members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share testimony with the Committee. I write to express my strong support for LD 1474 - An Act to Strengthen the Teaching of Wabanaki Studies in Maine Schools. I write as a proud Mainer and Professor of Education, Emeritus, at Colby College, where I taught for 31 years.

More than two decades ago, Maine took a historic step by requiring that Wabanaki history, political and economic systems, and culture be included in all public K-12 curricula. However, as the 2022 report from the Wabanaki Alliance, the Maine Indian Tribal-State Commission, ACLU of Maine, and the Abbe Museum makes clear, the law's promise has yet to be fulfilled. Most school districts have not meaningfully implemented Wabanaki studies, leaving generations of students without a full understanding of Maine's original peoples and their continuing contributions.

LD 1474 is a necessary and overdue response. Creating a Wabanaki Studies Specialist, securing ongoing funding for Wabanaki advisors, and integrating a Wabanaki studies requirement into teacher certification are critical steps to ensure real, sustained progress. Equally important, the bill ensures that Wabanaki voices are central to shaping educational materials and professional development opportunities, promoting authenticity, respect, and collaboration.

Passing LD 1474 will honor Maine's commitments, foster richer and more accurate educational experiences for all students, and demonstrate respect for the Wabanaki Nations whose histories and cultures are deeply woven into the fabric of our state. It is an essential investment in truth, reconciliation, and the future of education in Maine.

I urge you to support this bill and to take this important step toward ensuring that every student in Maine has the opportunity to learn an honest and inclusive history.

Thank you for your time and leadership.

Sincerely,

Mark Tappan
Portland