

**Testimony by Wayne Cobb of Portland, on LD 1474**  
**“An Act to Strengthen the Teaching of Wabanaki Studies in Maine Schools.”**

To Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy and Esteemed Members of the Committee:

I have long been aware of the need for a comprehensive approach to teaching Wabanaki studies, grades K through 12. LD 291, signed into law on June 15, 2001, requires schools to teach Maine K–12 students about Wabanaki territories, economic systems, cultural systems, governments, and political systems, as well as the Wabanaki Tribes’ relationships with local, state, national, and international governments. This Wabanaki Studies Law is critical to overcoming stereotypes and ignorance about Indigenous peoples, which are harmful to Wabanaki students and non-Native students alike.

However, a 2022 study by the Wabanaki Alliance, The Maine Indian Tribal-State Commission, the Abbe Museum and the ACLU of Maine found that the Wabanaki Studies Law was not being meaningfully enforced across the state. Since 2001, Maine students have graduated with little or no education about the Wabanaki Nations, and Wabanaki students continue to be erased from their own home’s history. The Department of Education, State Legislature, and individual school districts have an obligation to effectively implement the 2001 law, but educators and administrators do not have adequate support and resources to do so.

If passed and with adequate financial support, LD 1474 would establish the position of Wabanaki studies specialist in the Department of Education, direct the State Board of Education to adopt rules to require the completion of the Wabanaki Studies component in certifying teachers, and require the Department to provide funding for contracted Wabanaki advisors and educators to help create and implement short-term courses to be made available to all teachers throughout the State. Only when we provide all Maine students with an accurate education about our inherited past and imperfect present can we have meaningful and informed conversations about our shared future.

I strongly recommend passage of LD 1474.

Wayne Cobb  
Portland  
LD 1474

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