

Ella Tabasky
Brunswick
LD 1474

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

My name is Ella Tabasky, and I am a resident of Brunswick writing in strong support of LD 1474, An Act to Strengthen the Teaching of Wabanaki Studies in Maine Schools.

In 2001, the Maine Legislature passed LD 291, making the teaching of Wabanaki Studies a legal requirement in Maine public schools. Yet more than two decades later, we are still falling far short of this promise. As documented in the report, *The Wabanaki Studies Law: 21 Years After Implementation*, many schools lack the guidance, resources, and training needed to meaningfully integrate Wabanaki history and culture into the curriculum.

LD 1474 is a vital step toward fulfilling both the letter and the spirit of the law. This bill will:

- Permanently establish a Wabanaki Studies Specialist at the Department of Education, a critical role currently filled by a Wabanaki citizen, but not yet protected or guaranteed for the future;
- Ensure that Wabanaki voices remain central to how this curriculum is shaped and taught by funding contracts with Wabanaki advisors who will collaborate on professional development and teacher training;
- Provide funding for school districts to create Wabanaki Studies-related activities and educational materials; and
- Require future teachers to be prepared to teach Wabanaki Studies as part of the teacher certification process.

This is not just a matter of meeting educational standards; it is about honoring our shared history, respecting Tribal sovereignty, and ensuring that all Maine students learn the full and truthful story of the place they call home. Montana, Oregon, and Minnesota have already invested in Indigenous education on a statewide scale. Maine should be a leader in this work, not lag behind.

LD 1474 reflects a meaningful and collaborative approach to equity and education. It strengthens the infrastructure needed to ensure Wabanaki Studies are not a one-time lesson, but an integral and ongoing part of what we teach our children.

I urge this committee to vote Ought to Pass on LD 1474 and help ensure that all Maine students learn about the Wabanaki Nations and that Wabanaki educators and community members are partners in that effort.

Thank you for your time and your commitment to educational equity.