

Dan Gardoqui  
York  
LD 1474

Dear Committee on Education & Cultural Affairs,

I'm writing in support of LD 1474- An Act to Strengthen the Teaching of Wabanaki Studies in Maine Schools. LD 1474 supports a permanent position at DOE to develop Wabanaki Studies curriculum and resources for all Maine schools. By permanently establishing the position of Wabanaki Studies Specialist in the Maine Department of Education, the bill ensures the inclusion of Wabanaki Studies in essential instruction and graduation requirements. Currently, a Wabanaki citizen holds this significant (though not yet permanent) position.

LD 1474 also makes Wabanaki voices integral to curricular and professional development. The bill requires the Maine Department of Education to continue funding for contracted Wabanaki advisors working with the Wabanaki Studies Specialist to create and implement professional development short-term courses for teachers. These courses must be made available to teachers throughout the state. LD 1474 supports enrichment of Maine school resources and activities. The bill provides funds for which school administrative districts can apply to support Wabanaki Studies activities and resources.

Maine is behind the curve in teaching Indigenous studies, compared with other states. Montana, Oregon, and Minnesota, and many other states have funded teams of employees to support statewide instruction on Indigenous studies. A meaningful first step for Maine will be to create the permanent Wabanaki Studies Specialist position and to ensure proper compensation for Wabanaki advisors working on curriculum and teacher development.

LD 1474 supports readying teachers to provide instruction in Wabanaki Studies. The bill directs the State Board of Education to adopt rules requiring the completion of a Wabanaki Studies component in the qualifications for certifying teachers.

Finally, as someone who personally partnered with a Wabanaki storyteller and educator for many years to offer hundreds of children programming focused on the Wabanaki, I can attest to the fact that nearly ALL of the kids (kindergarteners and 3rd graders) who came to this programming new little to nothing about the people who've been living on the land we call Maine for over 12,000 years.

Please help us fix this plague of ignorance about the Wabanaki Cultures by better integrating this into our schools.

Thank you for your service.