

Testimony in Support of LD 1474: An Act to Strengthen the Teaching of Wabanaki Studies in Maine Schools.

Sponsor: Rep. Laurie Osher (D-Orono)

Submitted to the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, Maine Legislature

Submitted by Cheyenne Coughatta Acree, Citizen of the Cherokee Nation, Tahlequah,
Oklahoma

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

Osiyo (hello), my name is Cheyenne Acree, and I submit this testimony in support of Legislative Document 1474, "An Act to Strengthen the Teaching of Wabanaki Studies in Maine Schools."

I write to you as a Tribal citizen, resident of Maine and mother to two Cherokee children. For too many years the horrors and successes of Tribes and Tribal citizens have been ignored or trivialized in our school systems. Growing up in Oklahoma, (home of the Cherokee, Muscogee Creek, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Seminole, Osage, Caddo and Kiowa Nations) I rarely heard our stories in the public school system. When our Nations were talked about, it was certainly not from a Native perspective. The State of Maine has done well to codify the teaching of Wabanaki studies in public schools. However, if the programs are not implemented and funded, it is a hollow victory.

Wabanaki history is a vital component in educating Tribal and non-Tribal children in Maine. My daughter feels such kinship and pride in learning Wabanaki history at Lyseth Elementary. Lyseth is fortunate to have Penobscot and Passamaquoddy citizens at the school. We were honored to have participated in a Snake Dance and drum circle, listened to elders speak and learned about Wabanaki TEK.

LD 1474 would ensure that Tribal children throughout Maine continue to be supported and valued in our schools. Schools across the state should benefit from this legislation. Teachers should be educated and competent to implement programming guided by Wabanaki advisors. A permanent position at the DOE should be implemented to achieve these goals.

I urge this committee to support LD 1474 and to affirm the existing commitment to Wabanaki studies in Maine schools.

Wado (thank you)

Cheyenne Acree
Portland
LD 1474

Testimony (attached) in support of LD 1474.