

Joey LeBlanc  
Eddington  
LD 1474

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Joey LeBlanc. I live in Eddington and work with middle school students in the Milford School District. I am testifying in support of LD 1474, An Act to Strengthen the Teaching of Wabanaki Studies in Maine Schools. As someone who works in education in Maine, and has Wabanaki students, I believe this bill has outsized potential to make a difference. For starters, it puts us on track for compliance with the law already in place – LD 291 has been a legal requirement for over twenty years, but few schools are meeting this. We are already behind other states in teaching Indigenous studies, although we are so often national leaders in other things. Creating at least one permanent Wabanaki Studies Specialist position will put us on track to meet educational needs across the state and align more with comparable efforts in other states. The infrastructure of a permanent position can easily snowball into more resources available, not only for other Wabanaki educators, but for educators across the state. There would be valuable funds for school districts to support programs and activities. Teachers would receive support - from their own education through to teaching in their own classrooms. Finally, in my own work with students both Wabanaki and not, the benefits of Wabanaki Studies education are deeply obvious to me. Bolstering this education across the state would make students of all backgrounds more knowledgeable about local histories and present contexts, and would make Wabanaki students feel more seen, understood, and respected, things I have found lacking and in need of healing. Please vote in support of LD 1474 to strengthen the teaching of Wabanaki studies in Maine schools and strengthen the next generation in our great state, in community with our Wabanaki neighbors. Thank you very much for your time.