

Jannika Coons
Portland, ME
LD 1474

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

My name is Jannika. I am a born-and-raised Mainer living in Portland, and working in higher ed. I am writing today to testify in support of L.D. 1474, "An Act to Strengthen the Teaching of Wabanaki Studies in Maine Schools," because I believe Maine's DOE has a responsibility to teach an integrated curriculum that unites all its residents.

Growing up in Southern Maine and attending MSAD 15 from K-12 (1990's to the mid-2000's), the Wabanaki were never discussed in school, despite possessing an undeniably rich history, inextricable from that of the state itself. Although it became law in 2001 to teach Wabanaki Studies as a formal part the curriculum (LD291), it wasn't until after graduating high school and leaving the state for university that I even began to learn the elementary aspects of indigenous life, historical and modern, within the United States, let alone in Maine. Even worse, I see this happening again today with my eleven-year-old nephew, who attends middle school in Brunswick.

It is embarrassing and shameful that Maine's DOE as spent more than a decade dragging its feet while states like Montana, Oregon, Minnesota, and others have already taken the necessary steps to meaningfully integrate indigenous-centered programming. With this bill, we can close the gap and finally join these states in uplifting indigenous voices.

For these reasons, I respectfully encourage you to support L.D. 1474. Thank you for your time and consideration of my testimony.

Sincerely,
Jannika Coons