

Testimony Supporting LD 1474 An Act to Strengthen the Teaching of Wabanaki Studies in Maine Schools

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

My name is Anne D. (Andy) Burt. I live in Edgecomb, Maine. I am testifying in **strong support of LD 1474 — An Act to Strengthen the Teaching of Wabanaki Studies in Maine Schools.**

For a few years I have volunteered with the Wabanaki Alliance and have had the honor and privilege of staffing Wabanaki educational displays at events in diverse communities around the state. What I have found both sad and interesting is that regardless of their age or the communities they live in, most Mainers know almost nothing about their Wabanaki neighbors, their Indigenous culture and history. I'm often asked where can we learn more? This lack of knowledge, despite the fact that teaching Wabanaki Studies has been the law for nearly 25 years, could be remedied with enactment of this comprehensive legislation.

LD 1474 would provide **resources and professional support to develop Wabanaki Studies curriculum, contracting with Wabanaki advisors** to work with the Maine Department of Education and its permanently hired Wabanaki Studies Specialist in creating courses and curriculum for teachers. It is important to note here that *the bill calls for Wabanaki involvement in this work, often an oversight when programs are created without Wabanaki people at the table.* The bill also provides funding for school-based enrichment activities and resources, a boost for teachers who may have the interest to integrate Wabanaki Studies into their classrooms but don't have the financial resources to do so.

From my many conversations with the public about Wabanaki culture and history, I believe there is a great hunger in our state to learn more. And we know from experience, an effective way to reach the general population is to begin the education process in the school classroom.

I urge you to vote **OUGHT TO PASS on LD 1474.**

Thank you.

Anne D Burt
Edgecomb
LD 1474

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