

Testimony in support of LD 1474
to the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
April 22, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and distinguished members of the Committee:

My name is Sarah Johnson and I am a resident of Sanford.

I am writing in support of LD 1474, An Act to Strengthen the Teaching of Wabanaki Studies in Maine Schools.

Maine is not currently in compliance with the 2001 Wabanaki Studies law regarding the inclusion of Wabanaki history in public school curriculum. I am saddened that we require a law to properly teach history. I hope continued funding of a Wabanaki Studies Specialist and for contracted Wabanaki advisors will help our school districts develop and integrate the needed curriculum for teachers as well as students. The most basic fact here is that we are not complying with our own laws, and what does that teach our children?

Beyond that basic fact though, is our future here together as a community.

To quote a 2020 article by Fiona Hopper, Social Studies Teacher Leader and Wabanaki Studies Coordinator, Portland Public Schools titled "[Confronting Place-Ignorance in Education](#)" relating to the absence of Wabanaki studies curriculum:

"Nigerian writer Chimamanda Adichie calls this the danger of a single story. For most white people, the single story is all we know. So we, like Thoreau, assume we understand the place where we live, assume we know what there is to know about it, and assume that we know best.

One of the many objectives of the 2001 law requiring Wabanaki Studies to be taught in all of Maine schools is to push back against place-ignorance. The law was written to ensure that no one can live here without knowing they live in the Dawnland, without acknowledging the Penobscot, Maliseet, Mi'kmaq, and Passamaquoddy nations; that students cannot learn about the imposed political boundaries that shape what we now call Maine without also learning about the continuous presence, governance, stewardship, adaptability, endurance, and resistance of Indigenous peoples here. In short, no one can live here and learn just a single story."

LD 1474 is about strengthening our community. It exemplifies Marian Wright Edelman's definition that *"Education is for improving the lives of others and for leaving your community and world better than you found it."*

I hope you will support LD 1474.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sarah Johnson

Sanford, Maine.

<https://www.nesl.edu/blog/detail/expert-advice-on-the-benefits-of-law-school-clinics>