

To: Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

From: Andrew Njaa, 53 Mackworth Street, Portland ME, 04103

Date: April 22, 2025

RE: Testimony in support of L.D. 1474, "An Act to Strengthen the Teaching of Wabanaki Studies in Maine Schools"

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

My name is Andrew Njaa. I am a teacher at Falmouth HS and live in Portland Maine. I am testifying in support of L.D. 1474, "An Act to Strengthen the Teaching of Wabanaki Studies in Maine Schools," because I believe in following the laws and intentions laid out by the people and legislature, and because we need to provide the resources and space to actually develop the knowledge and capacity to teach content that unfortunately, most of us do not have .

Understanding and respecting living Wabanaki culture is integral to understanding and respecting Maine.

Maine is behind the curve relative to other states that have recognized the importance of including indigenous voices and experience in their education departments, and have whole Indigenous Studies teams providing context, content and support to teachers. In Maine, as a teacher I may wish to respect current law and develop appropriate content for my classes in Wabanaki studies. However I also need to be conscious of accurate and culturally appropriate information and resources to draw upon. The inclusion of a permanent position for a Wabanaki Studies Specialist at the Dept of Ed, and of the capacity to appropriately compensate a group of Wabanaki advisors as required would be a solid and welcome start to creating the required material we as teachers need in order to do our work effectively. I would have a vetted and quality set of materials and community to draw on, and be able to know that the basis for my lessons and curriculum is accurate, appropriate and authentic to Maine.

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

Sincerely,

Andrew Njaa - Physics and STEM educator