

Heather Butler
Camden
LD 1474

To: Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

From: Heather Butler, Camden-Rockport Middle School Teacher, Grade 5

Date: April 21, 2025

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

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

My name is Heather Butler, and I am a 5th grade teacher at Camden-Rockport Middle school and I live in Appleton, Maine.

I am testifying in strong support of L.D. 1474, “An Act to Strengthen the Teaching of Wabanaki Studies in Maine Schools,” because, first and foremost, the inclusion of Wabanaki Studies in public education is not merely a recommendation—it is mandated by Maine state law.

When I relocated to Maine from Connecticut in 2020 and began teaching in Camden, one of my top priorities was to ensure my curriculum aligned with the state’s educational standards. As I delved into research on Wabanaki Studies, I was surprised to discover how little progress schools across the state were teaching these standards. I felt a strong responsibility to incorporate Wabanaki Studies into my teaching, yet I was uncertain about where to begin or how to do it in a way that honored the subject’s complexity and cultural significance. I was apprehensive—not because I doubted its importance, but because I wanted to approach the work with accuracy and respect. Over the course of that year, however, I became increasingly aware of the commendable efforts underway to support educators from the state. The development of resources such as Moose Modules, online guidance, and detailed teacher handbooks has been instrumental. These tools are not only vital for teachers striving to meet state standards, but also for the students whose understanding of Maine’s full history depends on them.

While the resources themselves are a tremendous asset, it is the availability of expert consultation and mentorship that has had the most profound impact on my teaching. I have frequently turned to Brianne Lolar and her team of advisors for clarity on lesson content and guidance on instructional next steps. Their support has been indispensable. Without their insights and accessibility, many educators—myself included—would feel lost.

The weekly Zoom sessions with Wabanaki advisors and mentors, organized by Brianne, are another example of how thoughtful, consistent support can empower educators. The depth of knowledge shared in those sessions has transformed my confidence and competence in teaching Wabanaki Studies.

This work is not only about checking a box for compliance—it is about doing justice to the true, often overlooked history of Maine. The ongoing development of accessible resources and expert support networks is essential if we hope to meaningfully integrate Wabanaki perspectives into our classrooms and ensure that our students receive a more complete and accurate education.

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

Sincerely,
Heather Butler