

Kailee Sprague

Regarding the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

April 22, 2025

Hello, my name is Kailee Sprague and I am a resident of Maine, and a proud ally to our indigenous communities. I am testifying for the fair and accurate teaching of Wabanaki histories as it is integral to our understanding of the current geographic and sociopolitical standing of the various Maine tribes, along with the history of our state as a whole.

As an eighth grader at Noble High School, I was exposed to Wabanaki histories which broadened my historical and cultural knowledge of our state. This helped to cultivate understanding, respect, and empathy for the residing Wabakani native tribes. Since then, I have lived in several regions of Maine and made close friends with members of the Mi'kmaq and Passamaquoddy nations. These individuals are some of the kindest and most insightful people I've come to know, and have been gracious in sharing their values, practices, plights, and dreams as Native women. With this deepened experience of indigenous cultures, my life and mind have been greatly enriched. This is why I find it very important for all members of the Maine community to gain at least a rudimentary understanding of the cultural, historical, economic, and political facets of Wabanaki native lives before, and during, the establishment and development of our state.

I want to share my story as a testament to the valuable impact that this education has made on my humanity, in hopes that it can help to provide others with a similar enrichment. To this end, I am encouraging the members of the committee to support the Act to Strengthen the Teaching Wabanaki Studies in Maine Schools. Seeing as the Wabanaki Studies Law was passed in 2001, and it has been largely ignored by the vast majority of public schools, I believe it is long overdue that the state legislature create an entity to enforce said law. To this end I urge you to vote in favor of LD 1474.

I give my thanks to the sponsor of this bill, Representative Laurie Osher, along with Chair Joseph Rafferty and the esteemed members of the Committee for considering my perspective. Your time and consideration on this matter is greatly appreciated.