



Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

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

April 22, 2025

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

My name is Gia Drew, and I am the Executive Director of EqualityMaine, which has been advocating on behalf of Maine's LGBTQ+ community since 1984. We are staunchly in favor of efforts to support full implementation of Wabanaki Studies in Maine schools. By incorporating diverse perspectives, experiences, and narratives into the curriculum, schools can create a learning environment that is inclusive, engaging, and empowering for all students.

A landmark law signed in 2001 requires all public elementary and secondary schools in the state to teach about the Indigenous peoples who have long inhabited the land that eventually became the State of Maine.¹ While this law mandates the teaching of Wabanaki studies in Maine schools, its implementation since passage has been highly inconsistent, and most often nonexistent. According to the findings of a 2022 report by the Wabanaki Alliance, the Maine Indian Tribal-State Commission, ACLU of Maine, and the Abbe Museum, many school districts have highlighted their enthusiasm for the topic and recognition of its importance, but also the challenges they face in developing and teaching Wabanaki Studies.² Said another way, most teachers lack the knowledge and skills necessary to teach Wabanaki Studies.

L.D. 1474 would address these challenges by permanently establishing the position of Wabanaki Studies Specialist in the Maine Department of Education, requiring the Maine Department of Education to continue funding for contracted Wabanaki advisors working with the Wabanaki Studies Specialist in creating and implementing professional development courses for teachers, providing funds for which school administrative districts can apply to support Wabanaki Studies activities and resources, and readying teachers to provide instruction in Wabanaki Studies.

We respectfully urge the Committee to vote "Ought to Pass" on L.D. 1474 in order to thoughtfully support the full implementation of the Wabanaki Studies Law. The original need for this law remains as relevant to Maine today as it was over two decades ago.

Thank you,
Gia Drew (she/her)

¹ www.mainelegislature.org/legis/statutes/20-a/title20-Asec4706-2.html.

² "The Wabanaki Studies Law: 21 Years After Implementation." Abbe Museum, ACLU of Maine, Maine Indian Tribal-State Commission (MITSC), Wabanaki Alliance, 2022, wabanakialliance.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/2022-10-3-Wabanaki-Studies-Law-Report-Digital-final.pdf.