

February 17, 2026

Dear Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine and distinguished members of the Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs,

I am the Piscataquis County Education Manager for Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC). My education team and I provide education programs for the youth and educators in Piscataquis County and in Jackman. I am a former secondary science classroom teacher and taught in Piscataquis County schools.

I'm reaching out to urge you to support LD 1474: An Act to Strengthen the Teaching of Wabanaki Studies in Maine Schools as it sits on the table of the Appropriations Committee.

LD 1474 is a critical step toward ensuring that Maine finally fulfills its 2001 commitment to teach Wabanaki Studies in our K–12 classrooms. For over two decades, implementation of the original law has been inconsistent. And many students still graduate without learning about the Wabanaki peoples, their histories, cultures, and contributions.

This bill would provide clear support for school districts, professional development for educators in partnership with Wabanaki experts, and make the Department of Education's Wabanaki Studies Specialist a permanent position. It would also provide culturally accurate and Wabanaki informed curriculum resources.

The Governor has already verified her support for Wabanaki Studies by adding funding for a Wabanaki Studies Specialist in her budget. This means that \$157,286 of the \$322,286 fiscal note on this bill has already been secured, and only \$165,000 is needed to ensure a quality and accurate Wabanaki Studies education for all across the State of Maine.

I began teaching in Maine classrooms in 2012 and was never told about the state requirement to teach Wabanaki Studies by any of the principals I worked with. Making sure schools are providing resources and training for teachers to meet this important state requirement is important.

I learned about the Maine Department of Education Wabanaki Studies resources in early 2025. Since then, AMC Maine Education has been delivering these extremely well written and resourced lessons in our programs for students in grades preK-12th grade all across Piscataquis County schools, libraries, community events, and summer camps. One of our most requested programming topics by teachers is Wabanaki Studies—teachers are eager to learn and have their students learn about Wabanaki culture and history. Programs have been presented to science, social studies, outdoor education, and elementary school classes.

I have shared the Art Educator guide with art teachers and the book list with librarians and bookstore owners as well. One school has requested training for their staff on Wabanaki Studies during a fall professional development day. We read stories from the Wabanaki Studies book list, teach animals, shapes, and numbers in various Wabanaki languages, teach Social Studies units on Wabanaki sovereignty/government, teach sense of place through Wabanaki place names and mountain creation stories, nature journaling, phenology, snowshoes and winter transportation and numerous other topics. Most of the classes have numerous Wabanaki Studies lessons (4 or more) which helps to build a deeper understanding and respect for Wabanaki peoples.



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The impact of Wabanaki Studies materials goes beyond the classrooms of Maine. The Wabanaki Studies resources were instrumental in updating our Junior Naturalist books to include Indigenous learning activities for guests at AMC lodges in Maine and beyond. I have also presented Wabanaki Studies resources to AMC staff and volunteers at various training sessions so they better understand the area they live and work in and can respectfully educate guests as well. The online learning modules have been instrumental in increasing my own knowledge and understanding of Wabanaki culture as well as that of my education team.

The work that AMC Maine Education team does would not be possible without the work and collaboration of the Maine Dept. of Education Wabanaki Studies Specialist and the long list of Indigenous knowledge sharers and non-Indigenous educators. Resources like these are extremely important for educators, especially those that work and live in remote communities like Piscataquis County and Jackman who are often too far from professional development opportunities that are concentrated in the southern and coastal areas of the state.

We encourage the Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs to pass LD 1474, fiscal note included. Thank you for supporting educators and students across our state.

Sincerely,

Genevieve Trafelet

Piscataquis County Education Manager, Appalachian Mountain Club
Dual-certified Maine Science Teacher grades 7-12
Former Maine classroom Science Teacher