



Aaron Dana

PO Box 123

Princeton, ME 04668

Phone (207) 214-8345

Aaron.dana@legislature.maine.gov

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

2 STATE HOUSE STATION

AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002

(207) 287-1400

TTY: MAINE RELAY 711

Testimony of Rep. Aaron Dana supporting
LD 1970, An Act to Enact the Maine Indian Child Welfare Act
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen and the amazing and awesome members of the Judiciary Committee My name is Aaron Dana I am the Tribal Representative for the Passamaquoddy Nation and I stand before you in favor of **LD 1970, An Act to enact the Maine Indian Child Welfare Act (MICWA)**. I am a victim of being fostered out of my community and placed with a non-native family for short term It was because of my Nokomoss (grandmother) who fought to bring me back home and because of her I am super fortunate I now share the culture I've learned and language with all that I can

The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) is a federal law that provides protections for Native American children and families involved in the child welfare system This law recognizes the unique cultural and political status of Native American tribes and seeks to ensure that Native American children are placed with their families, their tribes, or Native American families whenever possible

After being victims to colonialism, oppression and genocide removing our children is another tool to wiping out our culture and people. Historically our children have been removed from their families, put into residential schools and fostered out to non-tribal families at disproportionate rates leading to loss of spirituality, language and cultural identity Assimilation is a threat to our culture and heritage, spirituality and way of life as indigenous people Keeping our children in our communities is the best way to fight for our way of life and keep our youth connected to their sense of self identity

Adopting ICWA in Maine would provide similar protections for Native American children and families in the state By recognizing the cultural and political status of Native American tribes, the law would ensure that Native American children are not removed from their families or communities without cause and that their cultural identity and traditions are respected

ICWA also requires that Native American tribes have a say in child welfare proceedings involving Native American children, ensuring that their voices are heard and their cultural values are respected This can help to strengthen the relationship between Native American tribes and the state of Maine, promoting collaboration and cooperation in child welfare cases

Tribal Representative (Passamaquoddy Tribe)

In addition, adopting ICWA in Maine would bring the state into compliance with federal law and ensure that the state is eligible for federal funding for child welfare services. This can help to improve the quality of services provided to Native American children and families in the state.

Overall, adopting ICWA in Maine would be beneficial for Native American children and families in the state, promoting cultural sensitivity, collaboration, and respect for their unique status as Native Americans.

Thank you for your time and consideration and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.