



# HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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*Testimony of Representative Michael Brennan presenting*

### **LD 1421, An Act to Provide Funds to the Maine Indian Education School District** *Before the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs*

Good afternoon Senator Rafferty and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. I am Michael Brennan, and I represent House District 115, which includes a portion of Portland. I am here to introduce ***LD 1421: An Act to Provide Funds to the Maine Indian Education School District.***

I know the bill does not provide many details, but hopefully this public hearing and the presentation from the Maine Indian Education School District will provide you with a clearer understanding of the bill.

Native American students in Maine often attend tribally-controlled schools for their pre-k to eighth-grade education. However, once reaching ninth grade, they often attend local secondary schools on a tuition basis. With the exception of Calais High School, Native American students do not have access to a specifically designed course of study.

LD 1421 is intended to address that problem.

The bill provides one-time funding of \$350,000 to the Maine Indian Education School District to develop and implement a Wabanaki-centered curriculum for Native American high school students. The Maine Indian Education School District will administer the pilot program in conjunction with state-approved high schools. Furthermore, the funds will be utilized for curriculum and staff development, as well as for transportation and support services.

As I already mentioned, there is currently a program at Calais High School that offers a planned course of study. The funds from this bill will allow that program to be adapted and expanded where appropriate to other locations.

The Wabanaki Core will provide flexibility for Native American students who need/want to take courses in their language and culture, including culturally appropriate history, science, and math

courses. At this point, the initiative is being structured as a pilot program with the eventual goal being the possible creation of a Wabanaki High School. This effort could provide the catalyst for achieving that objective.

I am happy to answer any questions you may have, however, the presenters following me will be in a better position to discuss any details about how this pilot program will function.

Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to working with the Committee to move this project forward.



## High School Graduation (continued)

Graduation rates of white and Hispanic students did not improve in 2022, while the rate for two or more races was higher than before the pandemic.

Four-year graduation rates by race/ethnicity 2020, 2021 & 2022

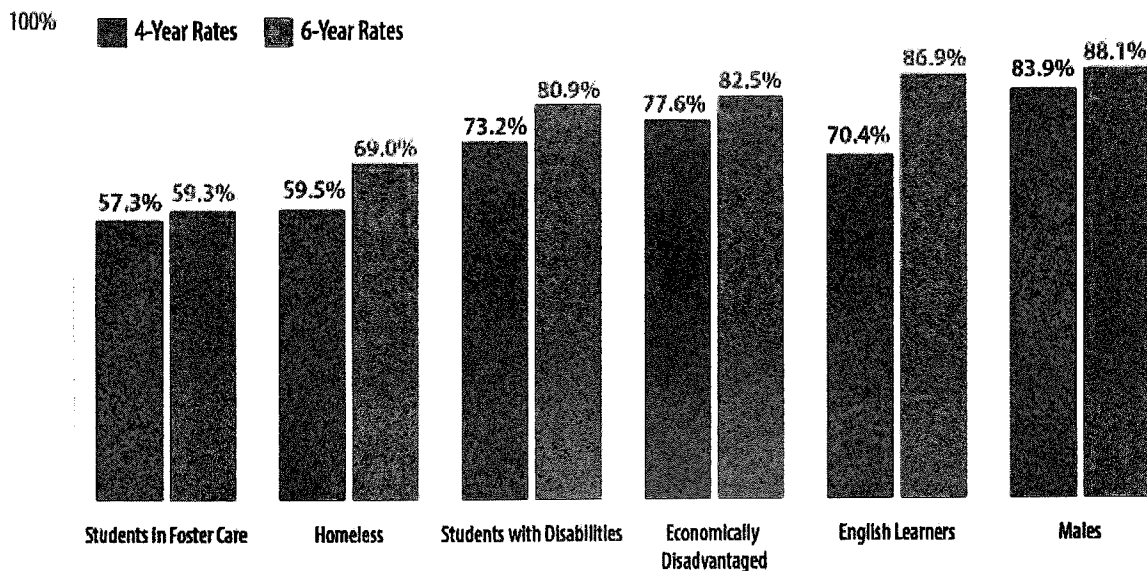
4-Year Graduation Rates	2020	2021	2022	Trend
Asian	94.8%	91.3%	92.4%	
Black/African American	83.1%	75.9%	81.2%	
Hispanic/Latino	81.9%	76.9%	76.1%	
Native American	72.2%	71.3%	NR	
Non-Hispanic white	87.8%	86.9%	86.7%	
Two or more races	82.0%	81.7%	84.4%	
<b>All youth</b>	<b>87.4%</b>	<b>86.1%</b>	<b>86.1%</b>	

Source: **KIDS COUNT**

\* Note that no rate was published for the American Indian/Alaska Native rate for 2022.

Certain populations of students are less likely to graduate high school in four years. When given the time and support they need, more of these students can graduate within six years.

Four-year and six-year high school graduation rates in 2022 for certain populations



Source: **Maine Department of Education Data Warehouse**, Student Outcomes