



The Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
Testimony from Kaitlin Young, Policy and Program Manager, Educate Maine

In Support Of

L.D. 1642: "An Act to Strengthen the Teaching of Wabanaki Studies in Maine Schools"

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and distinguished Education and Cultural Affairs Committee members, my name is Kaitlin Young, Policy and Program Manager of Educate Maine, a business-led education advocacy organization.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of L.D. #1642. Educate Maine's mission is to ensure that Maine people are prepared to succeed in education and career and that all Maine people reach their highest educational potential. I believe this legislation can make a positive difference in our education system, support our teachers, and enrich the learning experience for Maine students.

As a dedicated educator in Maine, I've seen and experienced firsthand the challenges we face when it comes to incorporating Native American studies into our curriculum. Despite our best efforts, it's been a struggle to fully meet the objectives of this policy. It's high time we provide the necessary structure, support, and resources to help us achieve the educational goals outlined in "An Act to Strengthen the Teaching of Wabanaki Studies in Maine Schools."

This isn't just about meeting a requirement; it's about improving education for our students. By including Wabanaki studies in our curriculum, we ensure that our students gain a deeper understanding of Native American history and culture. This legislation promotes diversity, cultural appreciation, empathy, and respect among our students and equips them with the global competencies needed to understand Maine's history fully.

For educators like myself, this bill offers much-needed hope and practical support. Many of us have struggled to teach Native American studies due to limited resources and a lack of understanding about the topic. Despite our dedication, there have been times when we unintentionally perpetuated stereotypes or struggled with complex discussions. "An Act to Strengthen the Teaching of Wabanaki Studies in Maine Schools" provides the essential tools, resources, and structured support we need to improve our teaching practices, resulting in more effective teaching and a more inclusive learning environment.

With its predominantly homogeneous demographic, Maine can benefit significantly from promoting a deeper understanding of Native American history and culture. This type of education prepares our students to thrive in an increasingly diverse and interconnected world, strengthening our state's foundation through inclusivity, cultural appreciation, and unity among our citizens.



In conclusion, I encourage you to support and vote for "An Act to Strengthen the Teaching of Wabanaki Studies in Maine Schools." This legislation represents an opportunity to advance education, empower educators, and enrich the lives of students and future leaders in Maine. Thank you for considering my testimony, and I sincerely hope you'll join me in supporting this bill for the benefit of our students, teachers, and the broader community.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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