



# HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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### *Testimony of Rep. Allison Hepler in support of*

#### **LD 2145, Resolve, to Add Members to the Maine Semiquincentennial Commission and Set the Compensation Rate for Commission Members Before the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government**

Good afternoon, Senator Nangle, Representative Stover and members of the State and Local Government Committee. I am Allison Hepler and I represent the towns of Arrowsic, Georgetown, Phippsburg, West Bath and Woolwich. I am here today to speak in support of **LD 2145, Resolve, to Add Members to the Maine Semiquincentennial Commission and Set the Compensation Rate for Commission Members.**

I taught history at the University of Maine at Farmington for 28 years, and taught Maine History on a regular basis. When teaching Wabanaki history, it's relatively easy to find resources and textbooks about pre-European contact and the early colonial period. But most textbooks drop any reference to Maine's tribes after the French and Indian War, which ended in 1763. With the defeat of the French in North America, according to conventional wisdom, Maine's tribes ceased to be important and indeed, simply disappeared. The point I want to make is this: they didn't disappear.

There is historical evidence that tribes continued to live in Maine, interacting with Maine colonists on a somewhat regular basis. This was the case with Marie Agathe, better known as Mollyockett. Or, more tangentially, Augusta midwife Martha Ballard's occasional encounter with "Elizabeth the Indien." And yet, in most Maine history texts, Maine's indigenous peoples are absent.

This bill seeks to add more tribal members to the Maine Semiquincentennial Commission commemorating the official founding of the United States. First, with respect to the military activities of the Revolutionary War in Maine, tantalizing tidbits that mention "Indians" occur in the journals of soldiers who participated in Benedict Arnold's 1775 expedition to Quebec – as spies or possibly guides, and as participants in the battles for Quebec, to name two examples. There are more.

This bill would also add experts in Franco-American and African American history and culture. We know that many men of color served in the fledgling U.S. Navy during the Revolutionary

War. Did any of them participate in the disastrous Penobscot Expedition? If so, what happened to them? Did they find a home in Maine?

In addition to the military stories, we also need to remember the non-military history of Maine during this time period, to recognize the English, French, African American and Wabanaki communities who populated the state. Questions that I have include: What did they do for a living? Did they support the Patriot movement, or did they shy away from taking sides? To what extent were these families and communities forced to participate or to take sides? What impact did the war have on these communities?

There are many stories to be uncovered and shared with Maine people. I am excited to see the Semiquincentennial Commission make room for this work. I welcome these additional contributions.

Thank you for your time. I am happy to take any questions you may have.