



Maine Conservation Voters

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Testimony in support of LD1474, *An Act to Strengthen the Teaching of Wabanaki Studies in Maine Schools*
April 22, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Cathy Breen. I am the Director of Government Affairs at Maine Conservation Voters (MCV), a statewide non-profit organization with 13,000 members and supporters that is building a just, thriving future for all by acting on the climate crisis, protecting the environment, and safeguarding our democracy. MCV is an active participant in the Wabanaki Alliance Coalition. I'm speaking in support of **LD1474, *An Act to Strengthen the Teaching of Wabanaki Studies in Maine Schools***.

The Maine Legislature passed the Wabanaki Studies law in 2001.¹ But the goal of the law - to teach Maine K–12 students about Wabanaki territories, economic systems, cultural systems, governments, and political systems, as well as the Wabanaki tribes' relationships with local, state, national, and international governments - has not yet been fully realized. According to a study in 2022, the Wabanaki Studies law is not consistently or meaningfully enforced throughout Maine school systems.² LD1474 aims to boost available resources to Maine educators, strengthen requirements and make implementation of Wabanaki Studies more universally successful.

The bill includes several concrete provisions to strengthen Maine's Wabanaki Studies program. These are consistent with recommendations of the 2022 study, such as:

- Support a permanent position at Department Of Education to develop Wabanaki Studies curriculum and resources for all Maine schools by making the curriculum a requirement for graduation;
- Require the Maine Department of Education to continue funding existing contracts with Wabanaki advisors working with the Wabanaki Studies Specialist to create and implement professional development short-term courses for teachers; these courses must be made available to teachers throughout the state;
- Provide funds for which school administrative districts can apply to support Wabanaki Studies activities and resources;

¹ <https://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/statutes/20-a/title20-Asec4706-2.html>

²

<https://www.wabanakialliance.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/2022-10-3-Wabanaki-Studies-Law-Report-Digital-final.pdf>

- Direct the State Board of Education to adopt rules requiring the completion of a Wabanaki Studies component in the qualifications for teacher certification.

Integrating authentic Wabanaki Studies into all of Maine's public schools is long overdue. It's part of an accurate, complete, and robust understanding of ourselves and our shared community. I hope that you will vote "Ought to Pass" on LD1474, and I thank you for your consideration.