



Committee on Education & Cultural Affairs c/o Legislative Information Office
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

April 22, 2025

RE: LD 1474, An Act to Strengthen the Teaching of Wabanaki Studies in Maine Schools

Esteemed members of the joint Committee on Education & Cultural Affairs,
~~Senator Libby, Senator Pierce, and Chair Rafferty,~~

My name is Madeleine Weatherhead and I am one of Khmer Maine's Land and Justice program coordinators. I am here today to support LD1474, An Act to Strengthen the Teaching of Wabanaki Studies in Maine Schools.

Khmer Maine is a nonpartisan, community organization working to improve the quality of life and the social and economic well-being of Cambodians in Maine. Our Land + Justice program creates opportunities for Khmer and other BIPOC communities to experience the outdoors, access different recreational activities, and cultivate community. At the heart of our program is developing deep connections to the land and inspiring environmentalism and action for climate justice.

We recognize that a crucial piece of that vision is educating the Khmer community on Wabanaki cultures and histories, and building connections between our communities. As we enter the second year of our program, we have begun incorporating visits to the Abbe Museum and other educational programming into our events. We are also cultivating relationships with Wabanaki-led organizations and our program has assisted with some of their land stewardship projects. These are on-going efforts that require our commitment and prioritization.

In 2001, Maine acknowledged the importance of Wabanaki education and committed to providing it in our public schools. According to a 2022 report by the Wabanaki Alliance, the Maine Indian Tribal-State Commission, the ACLU of Maine, and the Abbe Museum,



most school districts have yet to include Wabanaki studies in their curriculum. Maine needs to be accountable to its commitment to providing Wabanaki education and prioritize resources to make that possible. By supporting a permanent Wabanaki Studies Specialist position at the DOE, centering Wabanaki voices in curricular and professional development, and providing funds for Wabanaki studies and activities for which school districts can apply, LD1474 provides much-needed resources to make full implementation of the Wabanaki Studies Law possible. I ask each of you to support this important bill and vote "Ought to Pass."

Thank you,

Madeleine Weatherhead
Khmer Maine
Land + Justice Program Co-Coordinator