

22 April, 2025

Testimony in Support of LD 1474

My name is Michael Young. I live in Cape Elizabeth where I teach high school social studies. I have a Masters' degree in Secondary Social Studies education, with an emphasis in Native American History and will complete a Graduate Certificate in Native American Studies from Montana State University later this summer. Despite this level of education, and having been a teacher for the past 25 years, I have not been equipped to teach the curriculum required by the state of Maine since 2001.

Not until recently, when attending a workshop put on by Brianne Lolar on Wabanaki Studies, had I received any materials specifically designed to educate my students on the role of the Wabanki in the land we now call Maine for tens of thousands of years. I respect the state's wisdom nearly twenty-five years ago to establish this requirement, but the efforts in bringing about its implementation have been neglected. The work that Brianne and her team have put into providing the resources and guidance to teachers across the state has been a huge undertaking, and one that should not have been thrust upon their shoulders alone. However, the passage of LD 1474, requiring ongoing funding for the Wabanaki Studies Specialist and for contracted Wabanaki advisors to advance the implementation of Wabanaki studies across the state, will help assure the survival of Wabanaki Studies here in Maine.

The final course in my program through Montana State, Montana Indian Education for All, is a requirement of all teachers in the state, and this bill will hopefully lead to the same kind of course in the great state of Maine. What better day than Earth Day to ensure the survival of the wisdom that has cared for our land and water's survival for so many years. We have already deprived a generation of students in this state of that proper education, and this bill, with your support, will ensure that another generation of Maine's students do not go without the critical knowledge to equip them to deal with the survival of our environment and the culture of peoples that have been entrusted with it for time immemorial. I hope this committee will join me in supporting LD 1474. Thank you for your time.