

To: The Committee On Education and Cultural Affairs, Maine House of Representatives

RE: Testimony in support of LD 453, for March 12th 2021 – *“An Act to Establish a Permanent Appointment of a Member of the Wabanaki Tribes to the Board of Trustees of the University of Maine System”*

Dear Members of the Committee On Education and Cultural Affairs,

The Church of Universal Fellowship in Orono is having beginning conversations about Wabanaki solidarity and the fact that our Church sits on Native land. As a result of these conversations, I have become aware of LD 453 and I am speaking in support of this bill.

Ethnic and racial diversity is enriching and challenging many people in our state. The members – administration, faculty, students and staff – of our University campuses would benefit from greater knowledge of, and experience with, this diversity. This bill would enhance the teaching and learning, better guide University-wide planning of programs and curricula, and more fully enable the mission of the University to be realized.

The communities of our various campuses, and the towns and cities throughout Maine are and will be served by our University graduates. These communities would benefit from the insights and increased opportunity for racial and ethnic awareness and understanding, which passage of this Bill would allow. A consistent Native voice would provide an invaluable advisory perspective in relevant discussions.

The Maine Tribes are actively seeking to improve and strengthen governmental relations with the State of Maine, so that misunderstandings and conflicts can be more effectively addressed. The Tribes also continue long-standing, yet unfulfilled efforts to provide accurate education and cultural awareness to non-native populations. A permanent position for a Wabanaki Native on the Board of Trustees of the University system would enhance opportunities, understanding, tolerance and growth for all of us.

I urge you to vote in favor of LD 453.

Thank you for your time and efforts on behalf of the people of Maine.

Sincerely,