

Hearing date: March 12, 2021

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

RE: Testimony in support of LD 453, "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,

We are writing to you in support of LD 453. We are the Tribal Education Directors, representing the 5 tribal communities in Maine; the Aroostook Band of Micmacs, the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians, the Passamaquoddy Tribe at Indian Township, the Passamaquoddy Tribe at Pleasant Point and the Penobscot Nation. We each work directly with students who attend the various campuses of the University of Maine System. Collectively, we have approximately 290 students enrolled across the University of Maine System.

Representation and connection with other tribal citizens is important to the success of our students. The degree of representation at all levels, student body, faculty and at its highest level of oversight: The Board of Trustees, is key to our students finding their educational home at a University of Maine campus. In order to support success and remove barriers, our students need peers, staff and administrators who understand their motivations, fears and stereotypes and believe in their unlimited potential. A permanent Wabanaki seat on the Board of Trustees would indicate that our students are an integral part of the University of Maine system.

Each University strives for student diversity on campus and the same cohesion should be represented at the Board of Trustee level. Inclusion of Wabanaki presence will culturally broaden the mission of the Board of Trustees and ultimately empower our students and strengthen our tribal communities. We believe that by assuring the Wabanaki Community has a voice on the Board Of Trustees, this sends the message that the University is invested in our children, our concerns and our successes. This representation is of the utmost importance and beneficial to future generations.

LD 453 will guarantee that a member of the Wabanaki community has a seat on the University Of Maine System Board Of Trustees, giving us all a voice. We urge you to vote in favor of LD 453.

Woliwon (Thank you),

Amber Wire, Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians, Education Director

Nakia Dana, Passamaquoddy Tribe - Indian Township, Education Resource
Coordinator

Fenton Jones, Aroostook Band of Micmacs, Education Director

Evelyn Dore, Passamaquoddy Tribe- Pleasant Point, Education Director

Candi Ewer, Penobscot Nation, Education Director