

January 9, 2024

Esteemed members of the Education & Cultural Affairs Committee,

I am writing today to express my strong support for LD 1642, An Act to Strengthen the Teaching of Wabanaki Studies in Maine Schools. It is long overdue that the state of Maine implements the visionary law passed in 2001 that mandated the teaching of the full and true history of this place. I work in the field of public history and community education and have led countless trainings where I have heard teachers express their need for support – they *want* to teach this material, but they want to do it in a way that is accurate, respectful, and integrated. If passed into law, this bill would help them provide the quality of education their students deserve. I have also heard countless non-Wabanaki people who have come through Maine's schools express their dismay and disappointment that they were not taught the full story about what has happened here. They want to do better for the next generations and for the Wabanaki people who have lived in this place we all love since time immemorial.

If we do not acknowledge the truths of our history – even the darker ones like colonial violence and genocide – how can we expect to move forward together? Schools are where future leaders are born. Let's prepare our state's next generation of leaders with the knowledge and awareness they need to serve all the people of this place. LD 1642 is a critical step in the right direction.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

Sincerely,

Erika Arthur

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