

Maine PRISONER ADVOCACY Coalition



Tuesday, January 9, 2024

Greetings Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and Honorable Members of the Criminal Education and Cultural Affairs Committee.

My name is Jan Collins, I am assistant director of Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition. I am here to support **L.D. 1642 An Act to Strengthen the Teaching of Wabanaki Studies in Maine Schools.**

MPAC's mission is to support Maine's incarcerated citizens, their families, and friends, in their struggle with Maine's criminal justice system. Our purpose is to reduce Maine's use of incarceration by creating a system that is ethical, humane, and restorative in nature.

I am a retired HS science teacher who also held social studies certification.

The consequences of leaving large portions of our population out of our national narrative, out of our history books, and out of our classrooms - especially the complex cultures of indigenous people - are evident in **our** treatment of native peoples .

When we see people as different, we treat them, consciously or unconsciously, as different.

Indigenous people and people of color are more likely to be charged, more likely to be convicted and more likely to receive harsh sentences than their white counterparts. (1,2,3,4, and 5) What we do not understand, we fear, and what we fear, we punish.

When we understand each other, when we embrace our differences, when we honor our cultures and histories, we create an environment where we can all thrive. We can be our best selves.

Despite all the research dedicated to the benefits of a multicultural education - it encourages success for students with different backgrounds and needs, teaches multiple perspectives, encourages critical thinking, acceptance of

differences, and leads to success in increasingly diverse work places - we still have far to go in implementing the concept.

As the research from the ACLU and Maine Indian Tribal Commission shows, we have yet to fulfill the requirements of the 2001 law requiring the teaching of Wabanaki studies.

It is long past the time that Wabanaki Studies should have been integrated into the curricula of all Maine Schools.

I strongly urge the committee to unanimously approve the passage of **L.D. 1642 An Act to Strengthen the Teaching of Wabanaki Studies in Maine Schools.**

Thank-you for your support.

With appreciation,

Jan M. Collins

*Assistant Director
Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition*

BOV Franklin County Jail

*PO Box 360, E. Wilton, ME 04234
207.578.8419*

¹See, e.g., Sonja B. Starr & M. Marit Rehani, Racial Disparity in Federal Criminal Charging and its Sentencing Consequences, U OF MICHIGAN LAW & ECON, EMPIRICAL LEGAL STUDIES CENTER PAPER NO. 12-002 (2012); Marc Mauer, Addressing Racial Disparities in Incarceration, 91 PRISON JOURNAL (2011); THE SENTENCING PROJECT, RACIAL DISPARITY IN SENTENCING: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE (2005), available at http://www.sentencingproject.org/doc/publications/rd_sentencing_review.pdf.

² U.S. SENTENCING COMM'N, REPORT ON THE CONTINUING IMPACT OF UNITED STATES V. BOOKER ON FEDERAL SENTENCING (Jan. 30, 2013), available at <http://www.ussc.gov/news/congressional-testimony-and-reports/booker-reports/report-continuing-impact-united-states-v-bookerfederal-sentencing>.

³ Cassia C. Spohn, Thirty Years of Sentencing Reform: The Quest for a Racially Neutral Sentencing Process, in CRIMINAL JUSTICE 427 (2000), available at <http://www.justicestudies.com/pubs/livelink3-1.pdf>.

⁴ Sonja B. Starr & M. Marit Rehani, Racial Disparity in Federal Criminal Charging and its Sentencing Consequences, U OF MICHIGAN LAW & ECON, EMPIRICAL LEGAL STUDIES CENTER PAPER NO. 12-002 (2012)

⁵ A report by the Prison Policy Initiative, based on 2010 US census data, demonstrates that Natives comprise just .6% of Maine's total population but 1.7% of the prison/jail population in Maine. That represents a grossly disproportionate rate of incarceration of

almost 3 to 1. WABANAKI RESTORATIVE JUSTICE AND HEALING COMMISSION
<https://library.bowdoin.edu/arch/mss/M321/WabanakiRestorativeJusticeHealingCommission.pdf>

Jan Collins
East Wilton/Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition
LD 1642

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