

Larissa Malone
Field of Education
LD 1642

My name is Larissa Malone and I am a former associate professor and chair of teacher education at the University of Southern Maine. I am testifying in favor of LD 1642, An Act to Strengthen the Teaching of Wabanaki Studies in Maine Schools.

I have been a teacher for over 25 years and I have taught every level of education, from preschool to doctoral programming. I can assuredly say that the most important part of any curriculum is teaching learners the history of humanity. Who are we? How did we get here? What triumphs and failures has humanity encountered? How do we create a better future? Grappling with these questions are essential to a good education and LD 1642 moves Maine educators and learners in answering them more effectively by providing additional tools to include Wabanaki Studies in the larger context of Maine history.

While the passage of the original Wabanaki Studies Law laid the groundwork for us being here today, it did not reach far enough. This is clearly outlined in the American Civil Liberties Union's report that highlights the disparity in its implementation. While LD 1642 is not a panacea to writing the wrongs committed against the Wabanaki people, it does move us one step closer towards building bridges, making amends, and cultivating a culture of reconciliation.

Indigenous education scholar Dr. Marie Battiste writes, "I have long accepted that decolonizing education is not a process generated only for Indigenous students in the school they attend or for students in First Nations programs in university" (Battiste, 2013, p. 13). Indeed, LD 1642 benefits all educators and learners across the state of Maine of all cultures and this is an opportunity for the state of Maine to be a part of the decolonization process. I urge the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee to support the passage of this bill.