

L.D. 343 "An Act to Set Aside Funds from Federal Block Grants for Certain Communities"

March 24th, 2021

Testimony in SUPPORT

Good Morning Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer and members of the Committee on Health and Human Services. My name is Ralph Cammack and I am a tribal citizen of the Maliseet First Nation at Kingsclear. I am speaking today in support of LD 343, to set aside funds from all of the federal block grants received by the Department of Health and Human services for tribal communities.

I am here today in my personal capacity however I would like to tell you what I do for work. I am the Infectious Disease Division Manager for Wabanaki Public Health and Wellness, an organization which serves all four federally recognized Tribes in the State of Maine. I would like to share with you why I feel there should be a designated set aside for each of the Tribal communities to support tribal public health needs.

Tribal disparities have resulted in devastating losses in our communities. We lose people earlier in life and more often than our non-Native counterparts in surrounding communities. Negative health outcomes are rampant. In no time has this been more evident than through the COVID19 pandemic. Tribal communities continue to be plagued by underfunding and lack of public health capacity.

In my work, I routinely provide direct social support to many tribal families who are unnecessarily struggling to make it through this challenging time. Families that need to stop working to isolate and have no other means of support. The need is immense and the challenges are ones that can be addressed with consistent funding that allows the tribal communities to build these support structures, prevent and educate the community members and give us the capacity to address these intense disparities.

The importance of L.D. 343 cannot be understated, we need your support and ally ship to address these disparities. This legislation can make a real substantial impact on our tribal communities and lead to a brighter future where Indigenous people no longer suffer through lack of resources.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Ralph Cammack, MPH, H(ASCP)CM
South Portland
207-478-3640