

Sockabasin



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Good morning, Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer and members of the Committee on Health and Human Services. My name is Andrea Sockabasin and I live on Indian Island, Maine. I am representing myself as a small business owner and a citizen of the Penobscot Nation. I am here in support of LD 343, **"An Act to Set Aside Funds from Federal Block Grants for Certain Communities"**. This act would set aside 12% of funds from federal block grants received by the Maine Department of Health and Human services to the federally recognized Tribes in Maine.

Improving the health and well-being of tribal nations is contingent upon understanding their specific needs; and we know, having healthy communities, healthy employees, and a healthy public health infrastructure is essential to the overall wellness of a community. Each of these elements is essential for a small tribal business. Many businesses have either no awareness of public health or a very narrow view of its role. However, all businesses and public health agencies share a common interest: ensuring a healthy population. Our businesses can only be as healthy as the communities they serve, it is imperative for me as a small business owner, to have both a healthy workforce and a healthy customer base. As a business owner, and more importantly a tribal citizen, I find LD 343 imperative to ensuring sustainable funding to the tribal communities and investment in their public health infrastructure. This funding is critical, it allows for tribal communities to develop health improvement strategies for today and into the future with certainty that funding will persist. It also meets federal requirements, often unmet by the State, that block grant funding must involve communications with our tribal nations.

Businesses must have a strong interest in supporting organized public health efforts; it is no secret that healthy employees are more productive employees. Preventative strategies improve employee health behaviors, reduce risks of chronic health conditions, reduce healthcare costs and health insurance premiums, improve productivity, and decrease absenteeism. LD 343 would provide the Tribes and that their public health infrastructure has solid funding, allowing for ongoing consistent funding and programming to address the persistent health disparities present in our tribal communities. I urge you to recognize the importance of LD 343, and vote in favor of **"An Act to Set Aside Funds from Federal Block Grants for Certain Communities"**; this 12% set aside will help tribal communities address their public health concerns and provide important infrastructure to allow the Tribes access to resources to rebuild and regain the health and vibrancy of our communities.

I thank you for your time and I look forward to our collective work to improve the conditions for the Tribes in Maine; presently and far into the future.

Sincerely,

Andrea Sockabasin
Penobscot Tribal Citizen and Business Owner
Indian Island, Maine