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**Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management
33 State House Station
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March 5, 2024

Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government
Attn: Senator Nangle & Representative Stover
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Senator Nangle, Representative Stover, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government,

On behalf of the Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services, I'm writing you regarding LD 2228, **"An Act to Establish the Wabanaki Veterans' Memorial."**

More than two years ago, Mr. Charles Shay (age 99) Wabanaki WWII Veteran (Penobscot Nation) who served as a medic on Omaha Beach in France during the D-Day invasion and his caregiver, Marie-Pascale Legrand, reached out to Senator Susan Collin's office requesting the Senator's assistance building a Wabanaki Veterans' Memorial. Mr. Shay's heroism during World War II is well documented. Thanks to his training as a U.S. Army medic and his remarkable courage, he saved many American lives on D-Day (June 6, 1944, on Omaha Beach in Normandy, France). As a result of his experiences, he has devoted his life to ensuring that younger generations grasp the sacrifices that were made during the war for them to live freely today, as well as working tirelessly to spotlight the contributions Native American Veterans made during the war effort - Mi'kmaq, Maliseet, Passamaquoddy, Penobscot Nation, and Abenaki, and other communities across the United States and Canada.

The Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management (DVEM) is responsible for all military, veterans, and emergency management related operations within the State of Maine. My office oversees the Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services, which has a statutory mission to provide proper recognition for the service and sacrifice of Maine veterans to their state and the Nation. When the Bureau learned of the effort to create a monument to Wabanaki Veterans, they assisted with the formation of a monument committee which is represented by Tim Shay (A Penobscot

Nation stone artist and Mr. Shay's nephew), Wabanaki Historic Preservation Officers, Wabanaki Public Health and Wellness, Odanak – Abenaki Community (Canada), Nibezun (A Wabanaki non-profit organization), a representative of Senator Susan Collins' office where Mr. Shay first presented his idea for the monument, the National Guard Historian, the Maine Arts Commission, and Maine's Vet Centers.

The history of Wabanaki Veterans' commitment to military service spans generations and war eras. Their communities have served (and continue to serve) in every branch of the U.S. military since the American Revolution. It is without question that Wabanaki Veterans take great pride in serving their communities, state, and nation.

The historical aspect of creating a Wabanaki Veterans' Memorial in Capitol Park is purposeful. Native American history and culture regarding this sacred location is well documented and the Wabanaki people's connection to the Kennebec River is innate. It has always served as a gathering place, provided sustenance, and provided the ability to connect within their communities. One must also recognize the wide-reaching area the Wabanaki Confederation covers – stretching north to Canada and into the southern regions of the United States. These communities have traveled and settled, yet their connection to this sacred place has remained intact.

There is enormous cultural value in creating public art that includes community identity, social and economic value, regeneration of space, beautification, education, commemoration, and representation. To create a monument that would depict the long-standing history of Maine's Native American Veterans, and their ties to the land for thousands of years, would be a first in our state. The incorporation of traditional art techniques and modern symbolism intertwined with traditional petroglyphs and multiple Wabanaki languages provides the unique opportunity to build a special piece of public art - one that all Mainers will be proud of for generations.

Respectfully submitted,



Brigadier General Diane L. Dunn
Commissioner and Adjutant General