

Testimony of Osihkiyol Crofton-Macdonald, President, Wabanaki Alliance, in Support of LD 247 An Act Regarding Recommendations for Changing Place Names in the State Before the State and Local Government Committee, Maine Legislature, February 12, 2025

Distinguished members of the State and Local Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Osihkiyol Crofton-Macdonald, I am the Tribal Ambassador for the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians, a citizen of that nation, and the President of the Wabanaki Alliance. I testify now as a representative from the Wabanaki Alliance in support of LD 247.

The reason behind the creation of this bill was to create a process by which Maine citizens might have a say in addressing problematic place names in their communities. In my time working for my nation, I have had a few examples of Wabanaki and Maine citizens wishing they had a say in changing problematic place names here in the state. There is a movement in the state now devoted to removing place names which memorialize slave owners, or place names built upon the oppression of marginalized peoples in other ways. It would be helpful to provide these citizens necessary support and resources. Yet there is a noticeable lack of policy here in the state to help these citizens. This bill creates helpful policy which is long overdue.

To share a specific example, an elementary school class in Camden recently reached out to the Houlton Band of Maliseets for help with a project they wanted to pursue. They wanted to include more Wabanaki place names in their hometown. What seemed like a straightforward idea became a long and difficult journey for them. They have taken it upon themselves to reach out to many different resources and have spoken with their local town council, but they still have a long way to go. What became increasingly clear throughout this process was that the state of Maine is not equipped to handle this type of request yet. A specific Advisory Board devoted to place names and able to help them navigate these issues would be a wonderful resource for people like these elementary school students who just want to create some positive change in their communities.

This bill can be a meaningful first step in helping Maine citizens gain access to valuable tools and resources to create meaningful change in their communities.

We recommend you vote Ought to Pass in support of LD 247.