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To Whom It May Concern:

We are Mrs. Whitney's Perspectives class at Hartford High School in Hartford, Vermont. We are writing to bring to your attention the legislation regarding the Abenaki nation, specifically those bands in Vermont. We are writing to share our support for these bills and their effort to support the Abenaki nation through cultural, fiscal, and educational programs. We strongly encourage you to make these proposals a reality.

First of all, Bill H.645 creates an opportunity to make scholarship programs and pilot programs available to anyone who is interested in preserving Abenaki language. The stated legislative intent is to "engage with empowerment and in partnership with Nanawaldagik (the language keepers) and the Abenaki people to restore the use of Alnôbaôdwawôgan (the Abenaki language) in N'dakinna across all of the indigenous lands of the Wabanaki Confederacy and more." This bill would provide a project to encourage the growth of community-based Abenaki language resources by providing contributions to eligible recipients. It is extremely important to recognize the Abenaki people to work together to protect their culture to the best of our abilities. That is why it is important for the state of Vermont to pass this bill.

Secondly, we support Bill H.556, which exempts those who belong to an Abenaki tribe from statewide and municipal taxes. This tax exemption will open new opportunities to preserve the Abenaki culture, as well as reparate the actions of our past. This will benefit not only this generation, but many generations to come. It will allow them to have more money to spend on cultural celebrations and nonprofit events to be held by the Abenaki, as well as more funds for educating their children, and to provide services to their peoples.

Third, we believe the bias in Vermont schools regarding the Abenaki tribe is unjust and unfair. We believe that Vermonters and all those of N'dakinna should learn about the past and present Abenaki in order to get a better grasp on what the Abenaki have gone through and what their culture is like. In order to make this happen, Vermont schools need to create safe learning environments for all students. Thanks to the findings of the Vermont Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and their report entitled *Racial Harassment in Vermont Public Schools*, it is clear that there is pervasive racial harassment in Vermont schools and bias in the school curriculum. That is why it is so important that the state of Vermont continues to fund and support the Ethnic and Social Equity Standards Advisory Working Group created through Act 1 today and in the future.

If Vermonters knew the history of the tribes that are struggling to keep their traditions alive, then they would do more to help the Indigenous peoples of Vermont make sure that they have a place to live and thrive. We believe that the Abenaki nation deserves the support from the state as outlined above, and we wholeheartedly endorse your supporting Bills H.645, H.556, and Act I.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to hearing back from you.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Whitney's Perspectives Class of 2022
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