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RE: Joint Written Testimony on Behalf of Teaching Native Curriculum (H.529/S.344) and Native Youth Ed Outcomes (H.536/S.318)

Thank you Chairs Garlick and Lewis and members of the committee for the opportunity to testify through this email letter, as well as for all the dedicated work you do on behalf of our Commonwealth.

Our names are Rev. Dr. Michelle Walsh and Rev. Dr. Clyde E. Grubbs, and we are the co-lead ministers of the First Parish Unitarian Universalist in Canton, MA. We are both also residents of Quincy, MA and members of the coalition of organizations represented by UU Mass Action in support of the indigenous legislative agenda. Rev. Dr. Clyde Grubbs also is of indigenous Texas Cherokee heritage. In Canton and Quincy, we reside on the traditional homeland of the Neponset Band of the Massachusetts Tribe.

We are submitting written testimony in support of An Act Relative to Celebrating and Teaching Native American Culture and History (H.529/S.344) as well as An Act Providing for the Creation of a Permanent Commission relative to the education of American Indian and Alaska Native residents of the Commonwealth (H.536/S.318). We hope you vote these two bills out of committee favorably.

For Rev. Dr. Clyde Grubbs, this is personal to his own indigenous heritage and as someone who also grew up and was educated in public schools for many years within MA. For Rev. Dr. Michelle Walsh, this is a moral issue of deep concern for generations of children here in MA who are being taught history that is incorrect and incomplete, particularly for native children who are not taught the value and significance of their cultural heritage. This is institutionalized racism within our public school system that damages all children of all races within the Commonwealth. When children do not witness their cultural history reflected in our public school curriculums, this can have devastating results for their self-esteem and educational outcomes as well. Both bills are crucial for addressing the well documented poor outcomes for American Indian and Alaska Native residents here in the Commonwealth – AND they are important for ALL of our children to receive proper education.

In fact, we jointly support the 5 bills currently moving through different committees, inclusive of these two bills under your consideration, that represent the MA indigenous legislative agenda, as seen here: <http://maindigenousagenda.org>. ALL of these bills are intertwined with teaching truth in history and culture and respecting the worth, dignity and rights of indigenous people. Additionally, we continue to argue that teaching and cultivating indigenous wisdom in our schools and communities is crucial at this time to addressing the challenges posed by the climate crisis. Here are two additional articles on this point referencing leading climate scientists from the International Panel on

Climate Change (IPCC)'s report:

<https://theconversation.com/colonialism-why-leading-climate-scientists-have-finally-acknowledged-its-link-with-climate-change-181642> and <https://www.climaterealityproject.org/blog/how-indigenous-knowledge-can-help-us-combat-climate-change>.

We urge you to consider this important link of the importance indigenous wisdom for addressing climate change as one additional reason for supporting these two bills before your committee. If self-esteem is core to positive educational outcomes, then what better motivator can indigenous children of the Commonwealth find in their science, math, and history classes than to know that their cultural traditions are providing substantial tools for saving our planet from the climate crisis? And what better motivator of respect for indigenous cultural heritage can be created as well for all people in the Commonwealth?

Thank you again for the work that you do. We urge you to vote these two bills out favorably, and we are happy to answer any questions as best we can.

Sincerely,

Rev. Dr. Michelle A. Walsh and Rev. Dr. Clyde E. Grubbs

Rev. Dr. Michelle A. Walsh and Rev. Dr. Clyde E. Grubbs
Co-Lead Ministers, The First Parish UU in Canton, MA