



## Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe

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January 2019

Senate Committee on Ways and Means  
24 Beacon St.  
Room 212  
Boston, MA 02133

The Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe calls for a prohibition on all Native American sport team mascots/nicknames/logos in Massachusetts public schools and supports legislation which would accomplish this goal, while ensuring for the incorporation of a regular curriculum segment devoted to indigenous culture and the effects of colonization.

There are several reasons why the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe supports such a prohibition, all of which is widely supported by numerous research studies. First, Native American mascots/nicknames/logos in sport are harmful to Native American youth, resulting in distress, lower self-esteem, and a lowered sense of future possibilities. Native American youth have a suicide rate three times that of their peers, and Native American high-school males have a suicide rate that is eight times greater. The existence of Native mascots/nicknames/logos in Massachusetts public schools does not ameliorate these existing challenges, and detracts from their learning environment.

Second, contrary the Commonwealth's education goals, Native American mascots/nicknames/logos in sport reinforce stereotypes about Native Americans. More specifically, Native American mascots/nicknames/logos increases stereotyping of and prejudice about Native Americans or other racial minorities. This names and images stereotype Native Americans as only brave aggressive male warriors from the past and fail to reflect the many differences between the over 500 Native American tribal nations in the United States. Further, it is problematic when people who are not Native American utilize our identities, names, images, cultural practices for their own purposes. This constitutes offensive mockery of our people and an appropriation our cultures.

Hundreds of Native American and academic organizations have issued statements supporting elimination of Native American nicknames/logos including the American Psychological Association, American Sociological Association, Massachusetts Teachers Association, National Indian Education Association, Massachusetts Commission on Indian Affairs, Native American Journalists Association, Native American Rights Fund, and National Congress of American Indians, which is the "oldest, largest and most representative intertribal organization" and represents over 250 Native tribes and nations.

A state law to address the problem of these nicknames/logos is necessary because many communities in Massachusetts resist calls to eliminate the Native American nicknames/logos used by their schools. The Tribe/Nation urges you to listen to our voices, and the voices of other Native American tribal nations and organizations that represent Native American people who reside in the state of Massachusetts. And, we urge you to consider the research, which clearly demonstrates that Native American mascots in sport are not educationally sound for Native American and non-indigenous youth.

Sincerely,

  
Cedric Cromwell, Chairman