

Meret Bainbridge, Saco, ME
On behalf of the Maine Unitarian Universalist State Advocacy Network
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Maine 131st Legislature – Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary
Testimony in Favor of LD 2004, Public Hearing May 31, 2023



Senator Carney, Representative Moonen,
and esteemed Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary:

My name is Meret Bainbridge. I am a resident of Saco and a Unitarian Universalist. I am testifying in favor of LD 2004, **An Act to Restore Access to Federal Laws Beneficial to Wabanaki Nations** on behalf of my organization, the Maine Unitarian Universalist State Advocacy Network (MUUSAN), which links Maine's 26 UU congregations in faith-based advocacy.

We advocate for state laws and policies that promote justice, equity and the inherent worth and dignity of all people. The fair and equitable treatment of the Wabanaki Nations in Maine and the recognition of their tribal sovereignty are among our top priorities.

We support legislation to amend the federal Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act and its state companion, the Maine Implementing Act. Due to these settlement acts from 1980, the Wabanaki Nations have been specifically excluded by Congress from more than 150 federal Indian laws that have been enacted in the past 40 years and benefitted the other 570 federally recognized tribes: laws meant to improve public health, recover from natural disasters, and promote economic development.

Because of the settlement acts, when Congress passes federal legislation for tribes nationwide the tribes in Maine must be explicitly written into the legislation unlike the other federally recognized tribes. This is an excessive burden to the tribes. They do not have the resources to track all federal legislation and lobby Congress to have them included in each piece of legislation. With the tribes not being able to access various federal funding their self-determination and economic vitality have been stunted. We believe giving the Wabanaki Nations access to federal benefits and funding would benefit not only the tribes but the surrounding rural communities.

This legislation doesn't circumvent the 1980's Settlement Act. It would change a provision in the Settlement Act that would at least begin the process of placing the tribes in Maine on the same footing as the other 570 federally recognized tribes. Please support LD 2004 to start putting the tribes and rural Maine on a path to prosperity. It is a moral and ethical imperative.

Thank you for allowing me to testify.