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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE

**Testimony of Speaker Sara Gideon  
In Support of LD 2094  
An Act To Implement the Recommendations of the Task Force on Changes to the  
Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act  
Friday, February 14, 2020**

Senator Carpenter, Representative Bailey and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary, thank you for welcoming me today. I am Sara Gideon, from Freeport and the Speaker of the House of Representatives. I'm here today to speak in favor of LD 2094, "An Act To Implement the Recommendations of the Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act."

The bill before you touches on complex policy questions in areas ranging from criminal justice, to taxation, to environmental regulation and beyond. But, while those specific issues are certainly important, this bill's significance is greater even than the words on the page.

That's because this bill represents an opportunity to turn the page on an era of Tribal-State relations in Maine that began with the passage of a law which has unfairly deprived Tribal Members of their rights for far too long.

The language of the Joint Order that established the Task Force that led to the bill before you read: "We, the Members of the One Hundred and Twenty-ninth Legislature now assembled in the First Regular Session, on behalf of the people we represent, take this opportunity to recognize that the Maine tribes should enjoy the same rights, privileges, powers and immunities as other federally recognized Indian tribes within the United States."

As the members of this committee understand, these recommendations are significant. They represent five months of rigorous evaluation and discussion among the Tribes, a group of bipartisan legislators, the office of the Attorney General, the office of the Governor, and the Maine Indian Tribal-State Commission.

Today the discussion broadens as you, the honorable members of the Judiciary Committee welcome others to gather the information necessary to explore these proposals, and their implications, thoroughly. Ahead of you are hours of discussion with the other committees of jurisdiction, with interested stakeholders, and with representatives of the Tribal Nations, the Attorney General's office, the Governor's administration, and the Maine Indian Tribal-State Commission.

As you work through this process together, I humbly ask that you look to that aforementioned language as a guide. The Tribal and non-Tribal peoples of Maine all deserve a process that allows us to modernize our relationship so that the Maine tribes enjoy the same rights, privileges, powers and immunities as other federally recognized Indian tribes within the United States.

I am also confident that all of us who have been involved in this process can and will continue to conduct it with civility, transparency and respect, and that the end result will be a product that deserves to earn the approval of both the state legislative process and that of the Tribes.

Before I close and leave you to begin your considerable work, I want to take a moment to thank all of the people who made it possible for us to reach this point. That must begin with Chief Dana, Chief Francis, Chief Nicholas, Chief Peter-Paul, and Chief Sabbattus, along with the other members of tribal leadership and their counsel, who were willing to put their faith in me and Senate President Jackson when we asked them to begin a process aimed at improving Tribal-State relations to the benefit of all of our people.

Thank you to the numerous legislators who played important roles in that process, both those who participated in early planning meetings and those who worked diligently and thoughtfully on the task force that grew out of them.

Thank you to Attorney General Frey and the members of his staff who have provided their considerable expertise and guidance, and thank you to Governor Mills and the members of her administration for their thoughtful counsel and leadership.

After all these months of work, I am truly hopeful that every one of us shares the same goals, and I know that the people in this room are willing and able to help us achieve them.