

LD 78: RESOLUTION, Proposing and Amendment to Article X of the Constitution of Maine Regarding the Publication of Maine Indian Treaty Obligations

Testimony Presented by Ambassador Maulian Dana

March 7, 2023

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and members of the Committee on the Judiciary. My name is Maulian Dana and I serve as the Penobscot Nation Tribal Ambassador and as President of the Board of Directors for the Wabanaki Alliance. I am testifying in both of these capacities in support of LD 78. We want to thank Speaker Talbot Ross for her leadership on this effort.

Tribal leaders and citizens, state lawmakers and leadership, and many of you serving on this committee have been keenly aware of the history of tribal state relations and how the last few years have seen an attempt to reach agreements and forge a new path forward while recognizing past difficulties and injustices. I can honestly say that I don't believe anyone in this effort is attempting to hold anyone accountable for the wrongs of the past but instead we are trying to find ways to make progress together. This is best accomplished when truth is a touchstone of the work.

LD 78 is a powerful truth-seeking measure. Truth that lives whether we acknowledge it or not. Truth that has far reaching implication and consequences. Truth that empowers us, no matter what our background, and informs our deeds and actions. Transparency is important and historical documents give us a glimpse into the conditions of a world we are all still forced to grapple with and improve upon. We can only do that well if we are fully aware of all of our history.

The treaty obligations found in this portion of the Maine Constitution lay the framework that was established when Maine became a state independent from Massachusetts. The Wabanaki people, my ancestors, were given space in this document and that should not be ignored. Wabanaki people have been in this land for over 10,000 years being good stewards and running some of the oldest continuous governments in this country. A key part of tribal sovereignty is having government to government relationships and this has been something the state of Maine has struggled with, especially since 1980. We have made some really great progress, so why not let these original treaty obligations be seen and printed? The fact that they were hidden sends a message to the tribal nations that the agreements and relationships between the state and our governments are not important or worthwhile. We hope that is not the case and they we can honor this shared history together.

We urge you to vote ought to pass and we are thankful for this step in the right direction.