

May 31, 2023

To: Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

From: Shirley Hager, 129 Chesterville Hill Road, Chesterville, ME 04938  
**Member, Friends Committee on Maine Public Policy (FCMPP) and Clerk of FCMPP's Committee on Tribal-State Relations**

Re: **Support for L.D. 2004, An Act to Restore Access to Federal Laws Beneficial to the Wabanaki Nations**

In testifying in support of LD 2004, I speak on behalf of the Committee on Tribal-State Relations of the Friends (Quaker) Committee on Maine Public Policy, a statewide advocacy group. For over thirty years, one of our primary goals has been to support a right and just relationship between the State of Maine and our Wabanaki neighbors. We align ourselves with the advancement of Wabanaki interests to the betterment, we believe, of all who live in Maine. Friends in Maine are also members of the Maine Council of Churches, and I am pleased to say that the Council unanimously supports this bill and has asked me to speak on their behalf as well. The Maine Council of Churches is an ecumenical coalition of seven mainline Protestant denominations who have 437 congregations in Maine with 55,000 members in their care.

LD 2004 would enable the Wabanaki Tribes in Maine to access certain federal laws benefitting Tribes; laws that are available to all other federally recognized Indigenous Nations in the country. According to terms dictated by the 1980 Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act, access to these laws is denied the Wabanaki unless each Tribe can manage to be specifically named in the law, a near-impossible feat to achieve. A Suffolk University report from 2019 found that since 1980 the Wabanaki in Maine have missed out on the benefits of over 150 bills passed by Congress intended for Tribal health, safety, welfare and self-determination. These bills have resulted in Tribes in other states achieving an over 60% growth in per capita income, while Wabanaki Tribes achieved only a 9% growth in the same period according to a recent Harvard study. Notably these bills, in creating access to federal resources, would also have brought economic and social benefits to the rural areas surrounding existing Tribal communities.

Health, safety, prosperity, self-determination, a hopeful future for our children: aren't these goals we all strive for? Yet here in Maine we have laws that systematically *and* systemically place obstacles in the paths of our Wabanaki neighbors, preventing them from pursuing these goals for themselves. Surely, we have reached a point in this State where our collective conscience cannot allow this egregious situation to continue.

**The Tribal-State Relations Committee of the Friends Committee on Maine Public Policy and the Maine Council of Churches strongly urges you to unanimously vote "ought to pass" on LD 2004.** Let us remove one more obstacle to a sustainable, more prosperous future for our Wabanaki neighbors, and for us all. Thank you.

Shirley Hager  
Friends Committee on Maine Public Policy and the Maine Council of Churches  
LD 2004

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