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House Speaker Talbot Ross, Senator Bennett, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee:

As Co-Chair of the Maine Wabanaki State Child Welfare Truth and Reconciliation Committee (TRC), I am delighted that this Act to Restore Access to Federal Laws Beneficial to Wabanaki Nations is being considered. In the TRC final report in 2015, we strongly recommended recognition of the rightful sovereignty of Wabanaki Nations. This bill, although not restoring full sovereignty, would allow the tribes to benefit from most existing and future laws that apply to tribes in other states. Unlike the nation's other 570 federally recognized tribes, the four tribes in Maine are excluded from federal laws because of unintended consequences of terms enacted in the Maine Indian Settlement Act of 1980. The 151 laws enacted by Congress since then would help improve public health, respond to natural disasters, promote economic development and protect the environment. It is right and fair to correct the inequities of past actions and not continue perpetuating an egregious wrong. Wabanaki tribe members deserve the same rights as every other federally recognized tribe. Thank you for acting on passage of this act that would rebalance the relationship between the tribes, the federal government and the state of Maine. The time has come.