



Committee on Judiciary  
% Legislative Information Office  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333

May 31, 2023

RE: LD 2004, *An Act to Restore Access to Federal Laws Beneficial to the Wabanaki Nations*

Dear Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Francesca Gundrum and I am Maine Audubon's Policy Advocate. Maine Audubon is a wildlife conservation non-profit – we fulfill our mission to “conserve Maine’s wildlife and wildlife habitat” by engaging people of all ages in nature through a science-based approach to education, conservation, and advocacy. On behalf of Maine Audubon and our 30,000 members, supporters, and volunteers, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of LD 2004, *An Act to Restore Access to Federal Laws Beneficial to the Wabanaki Nations*.

Wabanaki people have been living in this place we now call Maine for millenia with an understanding of and connection to natural resources far deeper than ours today. Their stewardship was interrupted by brutal force and violence, which is part of a shameful history that has resulted in the Wabanaki Nations losing 98% of their population and access to most of the lands, waters, and wildlife that they have lived in relationship with for thousands of years. Signed in 1980, the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act has kept the Wabanaki Nations from benefiting from more than 150 federal laws, including laws that would have helped foster job creation, economic development, health care access, natural disaster response, environmental protection, drinking water safety, and more. For more than 40 years, the Wabanaki Nations have endured a different, more restrictive status than all 570 other federally-recognized tribes throughout the United States. It is past time to help restore the inherent power and rights of the Wabanaki Nations to make decisions that affect their lands, waters, communities, health, economic future, and more.

LD 2004 would change a provision in the 1980 Settlement Act that would at least begin the process of placing the Wabanaki Nations on similar footing as other federally-recognized tribes. Currently, whenever Congress passes legislation that impacts federally-recognized tribes, the Wabanaki Nations must be explicitly included in the bill's text in order for them to receive benefits. This burden



is unique to the Wabanaki Nations only. This Committee has an opportunity to begin the essential work of addressing items that will help restore inherent self-determination to the Wabanaki Nations.

Above all else, Maine Audubon strives to engage people in the conservation of wildlife and wildlife habitat. We feel that the ability to engage in that important work is significantly weakened if people are disempowered, marginalized, or disenfranchised. Maine Audubon supports LD 2004 because it would help address one of many egregious harms to the health and prosperity of the Wabanaki Nations and the relationship they hold with their lands, waters, and wildlife. We strongly encourage this Committee to vote in support of this crucially important bill. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Francesca Gundrum".

Francesca "Ches" Gundrum  
Policy Advocate