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I am proud of Maine for many things. I am proud of its increased minimum wage. I am proud of its Medicare expansion. I am proud that it is earnestly working on improving housing access.

But there is one glaring thing about Maine that does not make me proud. The state's failure to recognize the sovereignty of the Wabanaki peoples it lives alongside is a travesty in the modern era. Refusing to grant sovereignty to the tribes while allowing children to live in squalor and elders and adults alike to perish due to a lack of access to resources is not something I can be proud of.

Abundant case examples around the country show that when Native peoples are granted sovereignty, economic booms follow in the non-native communities around them. Refusing to grant the Wabanaki sovereignty is only further driving nails into Washington County, already among the poorest in the state.

Lift up the Wabanaki, recognize their innate sovereignty, and in so doing, lift up all of us - for a future we can be proud of, instead of a present we must live in shame with.