

Testimony of Sarah Woodbury, Vice President of Policy and Advocacy, Defend Our Health  
In Opposition of LD 813, "An Act Regarding State Recognition of Native American Tribes"  
Before the Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry Committee  
March 12, 2025

Senator Carney, Representative Kuh, and members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Sarah Woodbury. I am the Vice President of Policy and Advocacy for Defend Our Health. Defend Our Health's mission is to make sure that everyone has equal access to safe food and drinking water, healthy homes, and products that are toxic-free and climate friendly. I am here to testify in opposition of LD 813, "An Act Regarding State Recognition of Native American Tribes".

This bill bypasses the federal process for recognizing tribes in the state. It places the authority to recognize tribes with the legislature instead of with the federal government, where the process has traditionally been managed. States do not have the authority to recognize tribes and similar legislation in other states such as Vermont has caused confusion. LD 813 would establish tribal status through a committee appointed by the Governor. This does not meet the high standard that the Wabanaki Nations have met to become federally recognized tribes. The leaders of the federally recognized tribes in Maine do not support this legislation and believe the process to recognize tribes should remain with the federal government. We support the wishes of the tribal leader and believe that the legislature should follow their lead.

Defend stands with the Wabanaki people in Maine. The state of Maine should recognize the inherent sovereignty of the Wabanaki people and work towards that goal. This legislation does little to advance that goal and instead sets up a new process for recognizing tribes that is not supported by the majority of the tribal communities in Maine. We urge the committee to vote ought not to pass on LD 813.