

Doug Welch  
South Portland  
LD 785

Dear Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and members of the Judiciary Committee:

I am writing to express my strong support for LD 785 and LD 395, two bills with great significance for Wabanaki Nations and their non-native neighbors in Maine.

Wabanaki Nations are alone among all federally-recognized Tribes in having to navigate state control from the settlement act of 1980 (MICSA). It is an outrageous situation. Both the tribes and the state economy are shamefully hindered in comparison to all other federally recognized Tribes.

There are, of course, profound moral arguments for granting the Wabanaki tribes sovereignty. I believe those are sufficient justification in their own right. But it would also benefit the Tribes and all Mainers if Wabanaki Tribes gained the benefits that all other federally recognized tribes enjoy. Both Wabanaki people and the entire Maine economy are currently constrained by MICSA.

An independent study by Harvard University three years ago quantified the current economic hindrance and potential economic gains for the entire state if Wabanaki tribes were treated the same as any other tribe in the United States.

The full recognition of Wabanaki sovereignty is critical to the continuance of Wabanaki decision-making and land care traditions that improve the wellbeing of people, lands, and waters.

The Penobscot Nation, Passamaquoddy Tribes, Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians, and Mi'kmaq Nation are sovereign nations, and it's time for the State of Maine to recognize this fully. LD 785 is built on recommendations developed by consensus through an intertribal, Indigenous and non-native, and bipartisan legislative Task Force. LD 395 brings Wabanaki Nations into the same status as every other federally-recognized Tribe in the US, ensuring they are included in future national legislation affecting tribes. Together, LD 785 and LD 395 take significant steps to remove barriers to Wabanaki self-governance and care for land and people, to the benefit of Wabanaki and non-native communities alike.

I endorse LD 785 and LD 395 and offer the Judiciary Committee my strongest encouragement to pass these critically important bills.

Sincerely,

Doug Welch  
South Portland