

**Testimony in support of LD 395
to the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary**

February 19, 2026

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary:

My name is Sarah Johnson and I am a resident of Sanford.

I am writing in support of LD 395, An Act to Restore Access to Federal Laws Beneficial to the Wabanaki Nations.

The Wabanaki tribes of Maine should already have the right to be included under existing and future federal laws exactly as all other federally recognized tribes across the United States do. They currently do not and I struggle with how we have allowed this injustice for so long.

Restrictions imposed by the 1980 Settlements Acts have been devastating to Wabanaki Communities in every way, including the ability to support and serve their people, protect the environment and it impedes economic growth, public health and well-being.

Data in the [2022 Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development](#) shows that “*Maine is conspicuous for the restrictions that MICSA has placed on the Wabanaki Nations for*

four decades. Elsewhere in that time, federal Indian self-determination policies and tribal action produced unprecedented and sustained economic growth accompanied by expansions of tribal responsibilities and rising fiscal, institutional, and human capacities to meet those responsibilities. We find that the consequence of handcuffing Wabanaki self-government is today visible in the stark economic underperformance of all four of the tribes in Maine—Maliseet, Mi’kmaq, Passamaquoddy, and Penobscot. No inherent or Wabanaki-wide attributes readily explain why all the Wabanaki Nations in Maine trail their peers by so much. The one attribute they all share is the restrictive construct of MICSA”¹

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<https://www.wabanakialliance.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/2022-12-2-Economic-Social-Impacts-Fed-Indian-Policies-to-Wabanaki-Nations-final.pdf>

That report alone should be enough for us to reflect on the abhorrent prejudicial treatment of the Wabanaki communities. It should not be necessary to include the vast positive social, economic and environmental impacts to all Mainers, including job creation and increased tax revenue, all detailed in the Harvard report. The fact is though this bill is beneficial to all people on all levels. It should have been passed long ago, and I hope you will now vote Ought To Pass on LD 395.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sarah Johnson

Sanford, Maine

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