

Catherine Cyrus
Brunswick
LD 785

Senator Anne Carney; Representative Amy Kuhn; members of the Judiciary
Committee:

I have lived year-round in Maine for thirty-nine years but have known and loved this state for all of my 82 years. I urge you to vote in favor of LD 785 An Act to Enact the Remaining Recommendations of the Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act.

It is time for the state of Maine to join every other state in the country in restoring tribal self-governance to the four federally recognized tribes in Maine – the Wabanaki Nations. Tribal nations in every other state have inherent authority to establish their own form of government, determine citizenship, preserve cultural identity, provide government services and make and enforce laws. The Wabanaki Nations have been left behind, treated as municipalities, unable to self-govern fully or access the full benefits of their sovereign status

For more than 40 years, restrictions in the 1980 Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act (MICSA) have blocked the Wabanaki from accessing the federal self-determination policies and benefits that have helped the 570 other tribes create jobs and economic activity. That economic activity has grown the income of tribes across the country by 62% compared to the 9% growth for the Wabanaki. Not only would modernizing MICSA financially benefit the Wabanaki, but research studies project that tribal self-government would add \$330 million annually to Maine's overall GDP. It is time to remove the barriers that have prevented the Wabanaki and their rural Maine neighbors from the economic growth experienced by the other tribes. When the Wabanaki thrive, all Mainers thrive.

MICSA is a "living document" and allows amendments. It is meant to be updated. Litigation over the MICSA restrictions has cost both the tribes and the state money that could better be spent on needed programs benefitting all Mainers. After 40 years of strained and contentious tribal-state relations, it is time to fix this broken agreement.

Over 1,600 Mainers testified in support of the 22 consensus recommendations of the bipartisan task force convened by the 2019 Maine Legislature. LD 785 is built on those recommendations that Mainers want to support. The time is right to pass this bill.

I urge you to vote in favor of LD 785.

Thank you for your attention.

Catherine Cyrus
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