

Jennifer Isherwood
Bangor
LD 785

I am testifying in support of LD 785 based on my personal and professional experience in relationship with Wabanaki citizens. These are hard working people who have taken care of this land for thousands of years, and have recently had nearly all of it taken from them, including their ancestors and children, their language, their culture. I am a staff member of the University of Maine's Wabanaki Center, based in Native American Programs. My testimony is based in my lived experience and uses facts summarized by the Wabanaki Alliance. For 40 years, restrictions in the 1980 Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act (MICSA) have blocked the Wabanaki Nations from accessing all of the federal self-determination policies that helped 570 other tribes create thousands of jobs and generate hundreds of millions in economic activity. While tribal income outside of Maine grew 61% since 1989, Wabanaki income grew only 9% (compared to Maine's 25% overall). It's time to remove these barriers. Childhood poverty in Wabanaki communities ranges from 40% to 77%, compared to Maine's overall rate of 15%. Harvard researchers project that tribal self-government would add \$330 million annually to Maine's GDP, create 2,700+ jobs (more than half filled by non-tribal rural Mainers), and generate \$39 million yearly in state and local tax revenue. When the Wabanaki thrive, rural Maine thrives.