

Mary Ellen Quinn  
WINTERPORT  
LD 395

Hearing date: February 19, 2026

LD 395 - "An Act to Restore Access to Federal Laws Beneficial to the Wabanaki Nations"

Testimony by Mary Ellen Quinn, Co-Coordinator Pax Christi Maine

Dear Sen. Ross, Rep. Dana, Sen Bennett and members of the Judiciary Committee,  
I am writing as a faith leader in support of LD 395. Pax Christi Maine is part of a national and international peace and justice movement based on Catholic Social Teaching, which includes the principles of a call to community, rights and responsibilities, care for God's creation and solidarity. Support of right relationship with our Wabanaki neighbors exemplifies all of these principles.

It is unacceptable that tribes in Maine are held back by an outdated agreement with the state, while the other 570 tribes across the United States are moving ahead with new laws, rights and responsibilities that the Wabanaki tribes are not able to access.

A study completed in 2022 by the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development shows that by having access to federal laws, the tribes in Maine and rural Maine communities will experience an economic win-win. The documented experience of 570 other tribes across the country, proves unequivocally that removing jurisdictional barriers has led to the creation of thousands of jobs and millions of dollars in goods and services produced by Native businesses.

Over the past 40 years, Wabanaki people have been unjustly excluded from the benefit of at least 151 federal laws which would have provided access to a myriad of essential supports including emergency funds for natural disasters and public health crises; for recruitment of healthcare providers in rural communities; and for protection of water quality and restoration of wildlife habitats.

As people of faith and conscience, we must take responsibility for promoting equal justice. Christian churches, organizations, and people are responsible for much of the suffering of Indigenous people in North America. Standing in solidarity with the Wabanaki people to support this legislation does not undo the damage but it does propel us to move forward in a just and equitable direction.

Here in the state of Maine, it's time to make sure all people living inside its boundaries have the rights they deserve. I urge you to vote in favor of LD 395.

Thank you for your time and consideration,  
Mary Ellen Quinn, Winterport