

Catherine Cyrus  
Brunswick  
LD 395

Dear Chairs Senator Anne Carney and Representative Amy Kuhn and members of the Judiciary Committee:

I have been a year-round Maine resident for 39 years and have loved Maine, its land and waters, for all of my 82 years. I write to urge you to pass LD 395, An Act to Restore Access to Federal Laws Beneficial to the Wabanaki Nations.

LD 395 would modernize the 1980 Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act (MICSA) and the Aroostook Band of Micmacs Settlement Act to give the Wabanaki Nations access to most existing and future federal laws that are available to all the other 570 federally recognized tribes. Over the last 40 years the Wabanaki have been blocked from the benefits of at least 151 federal laws because of Settlement Act restrictions that require the Wabanaki to be explicitly written into each federal law in order to benefit from its ruling. Included in those lost benefits are the provision of emergency funds for natural disasters and public health crises; help to recruit licensed medical professionals to work in tribal health centers and the ability to assume primary regulatory authority for federal environmental programs on tribal lands.

Of economic significance, removing the jurisdictional restrictions of the Settlement Act would allow the Wabanaki Nations and their rural neighbors to take advantage of policies, programs and funding that, for other eligible tribes across the country, have led to the creation of thousands of jobs and hundreds of dollars in goods and services produced by Native businesses.

LD 395 has bipartisan legislative support and is similar to legislation passed by the House and Senate in 2023 – again with bipartisan support. That 2023 legislation was vetoed by Governor Mills.

It is time to pass LD 395, a bill Mainers support!

Thank you for your attention and concern.  
Catherine Cyrus  
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