

Barbara Kates  
Bangor  
LD 785

February 18, 2026

To Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Members of the Judiciary Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to support LD 785, An Act to Advance  
Self-determination for Wabanaki Nations

My name is Barbara Kates and I live in Bangor. I am old enough to well remember when the Settlement Acts originally were passed into law. Like many Mainers, I thought it was all good news - that the tribes were finally getting land back. Little did I understand the harm those acts would cause by creating new and significant ways to keep the Wabanaki nations within the state's control. Thank you to all of you who have tried to fix this in the past. Please do so again and I hope all of the committee will join you.

This is not an issue that is simply about fairness in law. It is also about resources for children, families and communities. The current Settlement Act restrictions limit the Wabanaki Nations ability to encourage development of good paying jobs and to protect our natural resources. And the sad thing is that the Act was not intended to be static. We can make changes while acknowledging the benefits of the Act.

Let me be clear, the Wabanaki have built strong communities through connecting with their traditions, creatively developing businesses, caring for community members, and pushing back the state's efforts to limit their decision making in their own communities. Even so, when we look at the report from Harvard researchers, we can see how much we will all benefit from passing LD 785.

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

It is time for change for Wabanaki communities and all the communities surrounding them. Please vote in support of the LD785.

Thank you.,

Barbara Kates