

Testimony in Support of LD 395, An Act to Restore Access to Federal Laws Beneficial to the Wabanaki Nations

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Sage Phillips and I am a proud citizen of the Penobscot Nation. I am also co-leading the Wabanaki Policy Youth Initiative, a group of Wabanaki and non-Wabanaki youth who are passionate about advocacy, policy, and tribal-state relations. I am here with many of them to testify in support of LD 395, An Act to Restore Access to Federal Laws Beneficial to the Wabanaki Nations.

Over the last several years I have personally had the opportunity to advocate for tribal rights on the national level alongside countless Native youth who are passionate about tribal policy. When I enter into these spaces as an advocate I am reminded that my nation is not on equal footing as the Native Nations in which my peers are enrolled in. When I explain why that is and introduce the 1980 Maine Indian Land Claims Settlement Act that bars our Wabanaki people from accessing federal laws, the room is oftentimes filled with shock and silence from young tribal citizens of Native nations outside of our homelands. In these spaces, I am surrounded by young people who do not know a world without their sovereignty and are shocked to learn that I do.

The Wabanaki Nations are the only federally recognized tribes in the nation that must be explicitly named in federal law in order for it to be applied directly to us. When my grandfather and elder Butch Phillips, now ancestor, negotiated the Settlement Act on behalf of our people 45 years ago he did so with the understanding that a partnership between the tribes and the state would develop and we would work together to amend it.

Today, I stand alongside a group of youth who should not be advocating for change to the Settlement Act this many years later. We say *kci woliwoni* (many thanks) to the tribal leaders, advocates, partners, and state leaders who have worked tirelessly to make this change happen ahead of our time. In our communities we center our actions on providing a better future for the next seven generations and beyond and it is now our turn to step up and do so. As such I would like to urge the committee to do the same by respectfully supporting LD 395.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and I am happy to answer any questions.

Sage Phillips
Wabanaki Policy Youth Initiative
LD 395

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