

Allison Page
South Portland
LD 785

Re: Support for LD 785, An Act to Advance Self-determination for Wabanaki Nations

To: Sen. Carney, Rep. Kuhn, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

Since 1989, tribal income outside of Maine has grown by 61 percent. In contrast, Wabanaki income has grown just 9 percent (compared to Maine's overall income, which grew 25 percent).

Childhood poverty in Wabanaki communities ranges from 40 to 77 percent, compared to Maine's overall rate of 15 percent.

These numbers paint a stark picture of the direct consequence of restrictions in the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act. No community should be locked out of tools for economic self-determination that have proven successful everywhere else, but that is what is happening to the Wabanaki Nations, as they remain blocked from accessing the same federal self-determination policies that helped 570 other tribes.

Not only would modernizing the Settlement Act right these wrongs, it would also be an economic win-win for the entire state. Researchers from the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development project that recognizing full tribal self-government would add \$330 million annually to Maine's GDP, create more than 2,700 jobs (with more than half for non-tribal rural Mainers), and generate \$39 million each year in state and local tax revenue. It's the perfect case for how a rising tide lifts all boats.

The world has changed significantly since 1980. The 1980 Settlement Act was meant to evolve with it. Its drafters called it a "living document," and the law itself allows Maine, the Passamaquoddy Tribe, and the Penobscot Nation to amend it. It's time to correct this 40-year imbalance and unlock opportunities for tribal nations and rural communities alike.

It is time to remove the barriers that have held the Wabanaki Nations— and Maine — back by passing LD 785.