

Priscilla Laskey
Brunswick
LD 785

I am writing in support of LD 785 because it will position the Maliseet, Mi'kmaq, Passamaquoddy, and Penobscot Nations on equal footing with the other 574 Federally recognized Tribes in the United States. The restrictions of the 1980 Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act (MICSA) blocked Wabanakis from accessing the federal self-determination policies that can support economic development in the Wabanaki communities and the entire state of Maine.

For over 40 years, Maliseet, Mi'kmaq, Passamaquoddy, and Penobscot Nations have fought and litigated for self-determination, and they have been blocked by the State of Maine at every turn. It's time to recognize, as the 2022 Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development study proved, that Maine's policies of not recognizing Tribal sovereignty are hurting people, particularly children. Tribal income outside of Maine grew 61% since 1989, Wabanaki income grew only 9% (compared to Maine's 25% overall). This has led to childhood poverty in Wabanaki communities ranging from 40% to 77%, compared to Maine's overall rate of 15%.

The 2022 Harvard study notes that Tribal self-government would add \$330 million annually to Maine's GDP, create 2,700+ jobs (more than half filled by non-tribal rural Mainers), and generate \$39 million yearly in state and local tax revenue.

On a professional level, the restrictions of the 1980 MICSA also hampers cultural work. As a museum curator, the federal law, Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) does not apply in Maine in the same ways it does in all of the other states, because of MICSA. This creates another layer of barriers to Wabanaki self-determination, allowing a situation where Wabanakis are extending more energy and funds than the other Federally recognized Tribes across the United States in order to repatriate their ancestors and ancestral belongings.

It's time to modernize MISCA. Please pass LD 785.