

To: Committee of Judiciary

From: Nina Mitchell

Date: Thursday, February 19th, 2026

Re: Testimony in support of LD 395: An Act to Restore Access to Federal Laws Beneficial to the Wabanaki Nations

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and honorable members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Nina Mitchell, I am a resident of Orono, and I am a student at Orono High School and a Rural Youth Organizer for JustME for JustUS. I am writing in support of LD 395: An Act to Restore Access to Federal Laws Beneficial to the Wabanaki Nations.

The rules should work the same for everyone. Maine is the only state that overrides federal tribal law, every other state simply lets it apply. That's not a small difference. It means the Wabanaki Nations have been playing by a different, harder set of rules for decades, and nobody ever fixed it. This has created real consequences. Over the past 40 years, the Wabanaki Nations have been blocked from at least 151 federal laws. That includes the Stafford Act, which provides emergency disaster funding, meaning Wabanaki communities were denied direct resources to address the opioid epidemic. It includes the Violence Against Women Act, which gives tribes the ability to hold non-tribal members accountable for domestic violence on tribal lands. And it includes environmental protections that would let the Wabanaki Nations protect their own water and land, something they've been doing for generations before any of these laws existed.

Stronger tribal communities create stronger surrounding rural communities. This isn't just about fairness for the Wabanaki Nations, it's about what's good for Maine. When the rules are the same for everyone, everyone benefits.

For all the above reasons, I urge you to vote “ought to pass” on LD 395: An Act to Restore Access to Federal Laws Beneficial to the Wabanaki Nations.

Sincerely,

Nina Mitchell