



***Testimony in Support of LD 785, An Act to Enact the Remaining Recommendations of the Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act  
Sponsored by Senator Rachel Talbot Ross  
Presented by Maulian Bryant, Executive Director***

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Maulian Bryant. I am a Penobscot Nation tribal citizen and serve as Executive Director of the Wabanaki Alliance. I present this testimony today on behalf of the Wabanaki Alliance in support of LD 785 An Act to Enact the Remaining Recommendations of the Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act. We extend our gratitude to tribal leadership for their guidance and strength; and we deeply appreciate the bill sponsor Senator Talbot Ross for her tireless advocacy for Wabanaki rights and self-determination.

The Wabanaki Alliance was formed in 2020 by tribal leadership of the four Wabanaki tribes to educate people of Maine about the need for securing sovereignty for our people. In five short years, we have built a network of support all across our homelands now called Maine, we have worked to build trusting relationships with lawmakers, we have advocated for policies that enhance tribal sovereignty and empower our communities and the rural communities around us. Today, I stand here with the support of over 335 businesses and organizations who support sovereignty. We have had such tremendous allies and progress.

This work began seven years ago when legislative leadership consulted with the tribal chiefs. The task force recommendations referenced here are the result of nearly a half a year of intensive and collaborative work between tribal and state leaders that was rooted in respect, education, transparency and the hope for a new beginning. There has been great work done to advance some of these matters in the years since the consensus recommendations were released and turned into legislation. We have successfully advanced some of these matters and we want to continue to work in good faith.

The remaining issues of jurisdictional control, stewardship of land and natural resources, and tribal self-determination are priorities for the Wabanaki Alliance. This bill would recognize our inherent tribal sovereignty rights and for our tribal governments and people to be able to operate in ways led by tribal policy and process, not under the state.

A huge part of the Wabanaki Alliance's work since 2020 has been to educate Mainers on why there is a disparity in our state around tribal rights. We have hosted community panels to discuss treaties, the 1980 acts, the work of the Task Force and the progress we have made together. Mainers are excited about these improvements and they embrace the Wabanaki people as partners and friends. We support these measures today in friendship and with hope for a brighter future together.

