

PSR *Maine*

Physicians for Social Responsibility Maine Chapter

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Testimony in favor of LD 395 and LD 785 – from PSR MAINE

Sen. Carney, Rep. Kuhn, and members of the Judiciary Committee--

My name is Sydney Sewall I'm a physician representing the Maine Chapter of **Physicians for Social Responsibility** in support of both these bills. **PSR Maine** consists of 300 health care providers in the state who have concerns about threats to public health beyond typical "diseases" – including climate change, environmental degradation, and nuclear conflagration.

How does LD 395 fit our agenda? Renowned Maine journalist Colin Woodard's book **Unsettled** presents a detailed history of the relationship between the tribes and the state (portions available free online) – including some disturbing details regarding the **MICSA** -- which stripped the tribes of many of the rights and benefits given to tribal governments in other states. Specifically, this outdated agreement kept the Wabanaki tribes from accessing federal resources otherwise available for (among other issues) disaster relief, domestic violence prevention, and addressing public health challenges. These resources could have been used to help break the cycle of poverty and cultural oppression experienced by a significant proportion of Maine's indigenous population. As a pediatrician, I am struck by the fact that the childhood poverty rates – a key social determinant of health – are 3 – 5 times higher in Maine Wabanaki communities compared to the state overall (40% to 77% vs 15%). The economic boost predicted to result from revising MICSA – along with the direct benefits from access to federal programs – would go along way in addressing this disparity.

In addition to being an issue of economic injustice, tribal sovereignty also has environmental ramifications. There are several federal policies that involve tribes (except in Maine) in natural resource decision-making. These regulations recognize the importance of protection of native lands, as well as the primacy of tribes in enforcing environmental laws in Indian country. In regions where there is debate over tribal authority regarding hunting and fishing, securing those rights can overlap with the goals of protecting environments to maintain healthy land and water ecosystems. In areas of the US where tribes have exercised some legal authority over environmental decisions, they have been constructive partners regarding the use of shared natural resources. The same should be true in Maine...their voices should be heard.

I urge the committee to vote in favor of both these bills.

Sincerely,



Sydney R. Sewall, MD (Hallowell)

Board President, PSR Maine