
TESTIMONY FOR LD 395

To: Committee on Judiciary From: Helena Ives, New Gloucester, Maine

Date: February 19, 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 members of the Committee on Judiciary,

My name is Helena Ives. I am a parent and educator from New Gloucester, and my family has lived in what we now call Maine since 1650. That nearly 400-year history has shaped in me a deep sense of responsibility — to this place, to the child I raise, and to the people who have called Maine home far longer than my family has.

I am writing in strong support of LD 395. The Wabanaki Nations have stewarded this land for millennia. Yet, for 40 years, they have been the only federally recognized tribes in the country, effectively blocked from benefiting from most federal laws available to every other tribe. Over 150 federal laws — including the Violence Against Women Act, the Stafford Act for disaster relief, and foundational environmental protections like the Clean Water Act — have been out of reach for Wabanaki communities because of the unique restrictions embedded in the 1980 Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act.

As an educator, I know that the next generation of Mainers is watching how we treat our obligations to one another. As someone who cares deeply about this land — its rivers, forests, and watersheds — I also know that the Wabanaki Nations have been among its most committed and knowledgeable stewards. LD 395 would restore their ability to assume regulatory authority over environmental programs on their own lands, which benefits all of us who depend on clean water and healthy ecosystems in Maine.

This bill would simply put the Wabanaki Nations on equal footing with every other federally recognized tribe in the nation. It has broad bipartisan support. It is the just thing to do and long overdue. I respectfully urge you to support LD 395.

Sincerely,

Helena Ives

New Gloucester, Maine