

Jono Anzalone
Portland
LD 785

To: Sen. Carney, Rep. Kuhn, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on
Judiciary

Re: Support for LD 785, An Act to Advance Self-determination for Wabanaki
Nations

and Support for LD 395, An Act to Restore Access to Federal Laws Beneficial to the
Wabanaki Nations

Sen. Carney, Rep. Kuhn, and members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Jono Anzalone and I live in Portland, ME. I am here to testify in strong support of both LD 785 and LD 395.

LD 785 would implement remaining recommendations of the task force on changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act, modernizing a law first passed in 1980 that has, for more than four decades, restricted the Wabanaki Nations' ability to exercise full self-government and access economic and educational opportunities afforded to other federally recognized tribes. These structural disadvantages have contributed to significantly slower economic growth and persistently high rates of childhood poverty in Wabanaki communities compared to the rest of Maine. Rebalancing this law is not a special privilege but a correction of an outdated policy that harms both tribal and non-tribal neighbors alike and, according to independent economic analysis, would benefit rural Maine's economy through job creation, increased economic activity, and expanded tax revenue.

LD 395 would ensure that the Wabanaki Nations are no longer the only federally recognized tribes in the United States that must be written into each federal law individually in order to benefit from it. This legislation would amend Maine's settlement acts so that the Wabanaki Nations can automatically access the same existing and future federal laws and programs that are available to other tribes—improving public health outcomes, disaster response, environmental stewardship, tribal governance capacity, and access to services like recruitment of medical professionals. Importantly, this bill does not change existing tribal gaming law and has broad bipartisan sponsorship in the Legislature.

Supporting these bills affirms fairness, justice, and respect for tribal sovereignty. These are not abstract concepts—restoring access to self-determination policies and federal programs will improve economic opportunities, strengthen community wellbeing, and foster stronger partnerships among Maine's tribal nations and all other communities in the state.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I respectfully urge the Committee to vote ought to pass on both LD 785 and LD 395 so that the Wabanaki Nations—and all of Maine—can move forward more equitably and prosperously.