

Andrea Breau
LEWISTON
LD 785

Sen. Carney, Rep. Kuhn and members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Andrea Breau and I live in Lewiston. I am writing in support of LD 785.

For the last 40 years, the Wabanaki Nations have been denied their right to self-govern, a right that has been afforded to all other federally recognized tribes in the US. These restrictions have harmed the Wabanaki tribes, harmed Maine's environment, and led to years of legal disputes that are harmful not only to the tribes, but to all Maine residents. I believe Maine to be a leader on so many issues, but in this we have failed. Now is the chance to rectify that.

In particular, this is a matter of economic justice. Federal self-determination policies have helped 570 other tribes create thousands of jobs and generate hundreds of millions in economic activity. While tribal income outside of Maine grew 61% since 1989, Wabanaki income grew only 9% (compared to Maine's 25% overall). And it's children who bear the brunt of this. Childhood poverty in Wabanaki communities ranges from 40% to 77%, compared to Maine's overall rate of 15%.

Harvard researchers project that tribal self-government would add \$330 million annually to Maine's GDP, create 2,700+ jobs (more than half filled by non-tribal rural Mainers), and generate \$39 million yearly in state and local tax revenue. When the Wabanaki thrive, rural Maine thrives.

Mainers overwhelmingly support Wabanaki self-determination. More than 1,600 Mainers testified in record numbers supporting tribal sovereignty legislation based on the consensus recommendations of a bipartisan legislative task force. Environmental organizations, social justice organizations, organized labor, and faith-based groups continue to voice strong support on behalf of tens of thousands of their members. Over 300 businesses and organizations have joined the Wabanaki Alliance Tribal Coalition — including the newly formed “Businesses for Wabanaki Sovereignty.”

Thank you for your support of this important legislation. It's time to remove the barriers that have kept the Wabanaki and their rural Maine neighbors from the economic resurgence achieved by tribes across Indian Country.

Sincerely,
Andrea Breau, PhD