

To: Committee on Judiciary

From: Will Lehan, 85 Mildred Ave, Bangor, ME, 04401

Date: February 19th, 2026

RE: Testimony in support of L.D. 395, “An Act to Restore Access to Federal Laws Beneficial to the Wabanaki Nations”

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Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and members of the Committee on Judiciary,

My name is Will Lehan. I am an Education Technician at Orono High School, and I live in Bangor. I am testifying in support of L.D. 395 because I believe the Wabanaki Nations deserve the same rights and benefits afforded to all other federally recognized tribes.

I have spent much of my life in Maine without fully understanding the extent to which the Wabanaki Nations have been restricted from exercising basic rights as sovereign nations. I’ve since learned that the Wabanaki Nations are the only federally recognized tribes in the country that do not benefit from federal legislation unless they are explicitly written into the law.

Because of restrictions established under the 1980 Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act (MICSA), Wabanaki Nations have been excluded from more than 151 federal laws designed to support tribal nations. These laws include, but are not limited to:

- Revisions to the Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act, which grant federally recognized tribes authority to implement pollution control programs and participate in emergency response planning;
- The Indian Health Care Improvement Act of 2010, which expands Medicare and Medicaid coverage at tribal healthcare facilities and supports the recruitment of licensed medical professionals to tribal healthcare centers; and
- The Farm, Food, and National Security Act of 2024, which broadened self-determination contracts and increased funding for food assistance programs.

Over the past four decades, these laws and others have led to measurable improvements in air and water quality, food security and food sovereignty, and access to affordable, nearby healthcare for 570 federally recognized tribes.

While L.D. 395 will not retroactively include the four Wabanaki Nations in these past laws, it will allow them to participate in the next decades of federal progress in tribal healthcare, food sovereignty, environmental protection, and economic development.

Elsewhere, these federal resources, funds, and programs have supported the creation of thousands of Indigenous and non-Indigenous jobs and generated hundreds of millions of dollars in Native-produced goods and services.

Maine has the opportunity to join the other 49 states and take a leading role in fostering productive and respectful state–tribal relations—relations that will benefit not only the Wabanaki Nations, but all people of Maine.

For these reasons, I respectfully encourage you to support L.D. 395. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Will Lehan

William Lehan  
Bangor  
LD 395

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