



Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on the Judiciary, my name is Lisa Margulies, I serve as Vice President of Public Affairs, Maine, for Planned Parenthood of Northern New England, and I am pleased to submit testimony in support of LD 395.

PPNNE provides comprehensive reproductive and sexual health care to approximately 10,000 patients per year in Maine at four health centers located in Biddeford, Portland, Sanford, and Topsham, in addition to online via telehealth. People turn to us for affordable, high-quality care including wellness exams, birth control, disease testing and treatment, cancer screenings, immunizations, gender-affirming care, abortion care, as well as a spectrum of primary and behavioral health care services.

As a mission driven health care provider, we fundamentally believe everyone should be able to access affordable, high quality sexual and reproductive health care in their communities, no matter where they live or how much money they make, and we advocate for policies that help make this vision a reality. All people deserve to access comprehensive reproductive health care, including abortion and gender-affirming care, free from shame, stigma, and intimidation. We see everyone who comes to us regardless of ability to pay, and in a typical year, we provide more than \$1.25 million dollars in free and discounted care to our communities in Maine. For many, we are their only access to the health care system.

PPNNE has strongly supported this body's efforts to address our state's current and historic racial inequities, the impact of which reverberate throughout the state, including in the field of public health. LD 395 represents a vital opportunity for the State of Maine to fundamentally realign its relationship with the Wabanaki Nations, correcting long-standing historical inequities by ending their exclusion from federal laws designed to bolster the tribes' inherent rights to self-governance.

For more than four decades the Settlement Act, regardless of initial intent, has stood as an obstacle to the tribes' exercising their fundamental rights, barring them from benefiting from more than 151 federal laws passed to expand Native American sovereignty since 1980. This overt exclusion from federal laws has had a decided and measurable impact on the well-being of the Wabanaki people, and though this injustice should not be discussed purely in economic terms, that impact should be recognized. While tribal income outside of the state have grown by more than 60% since 1989, Wabanaki income growth has stagnated growing by just 9% (compared to 25% income growth in Maine overall).

LD 395 would rectify gross historical inequities and place the tribes in Maine on equal footing with the other 570 federally recognized tribes in 49 states. This legislation would enable the Wabanaki people to reap the benefits of a multitude of federal programs and protections including but not limited to the Violence Against Women Act, the Indian Health Care



Improvement Act, and Clean Air and Water Acts, enabling the tribes to better protect their peoples and their lands.

The rights to self-determination and self-governance are fundamental to our conceptions of human rights and liberty and must apply to all people. This legislation is an important next step in the process of restoring the inherent rights of the Passamaquoddy Tribe, the Penobscot Nation, and the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians to self-govern within their respective territories in accordance with the same federal laws that generally govern tribal lands elsewhere in the United States as well as extending the same protections to the persons of Mi'kmaq nation who were not party to the initial Settlement Act. LD 395 would allow the tribes to determine their communities' futures on their native lands without interference from the State.

We must also acknowledge that the denial of self-governance for tribes is inextricably linked to the denial of reproductive autonomy embedded in the history of the State of Maine and its relations with Maine tribes. Reproductive oppression in Maine has taken many forms, but at its core is the denial of self-determination and agency. Forced sterilization, child apprehension, forced evacuation, and the total and complete loss of decision-making about one's health and body are real and painful chapters of our history. Today, reproductive oppression is more insidious, but we do not have to look far to see how laws aimed at restricting access to reproductive and sexual health care continue to harm.

To help right these wrongs, we support and advocate for reproductive justice, which is broadly understood as "the complete physical, mental, spiritual, political, social, and economic wellbeing of women and girls."¹ Put simply, reproductive justice is the human right to have personal bodily autonomy, have children, not have children, and parent children in safe and sustainable communities. Indigenous communities have always been a central part of the reproductive justice movement.

The road to reproductive justice in Maine runs through LD 395 and the right to self-determine and self-govern for Maine tribes. Maine tribes should have the right to self-govern without state interference and must be allowed to reap the benefits of federal legislation both present and future crafted to help them achieve this goal. I urge the members of this committee vote "Ought to Pass" on LD 395.

¹ i Chukwudi Onwuachi-Saunders, Reproductive Rights, Reproductive Justice: Redefining Challenges to Create Optimal Health for All Women, *Journal of Healthcare, Science and the Humanities* , Summer 2019, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9930478>