

Barbara Acosta
Trenton
LD 395

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

My name is Barbara Acosta. I am a resident of Trenton and a member of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Ellsworth. Our congregation is a member of the Wabanaki Alliance Tribal Coalition, and our ministry is united in support of the passage of LD395, a bill to restore the Wabanaki Nations' inherent rights to self-determination. I am also one of the 500 members of the Maine UU State Advocacy Network (MUUSAN), which links Maine's 26 UU congregations in working for legislation that embodies those values.

As Unitarian Universalists, we acknowledge that the Wabanaki people occupied this land we call Maine for over twelve thousand years, long before European settlers arrived. They cared for its rivers, lakes and forests in ways that we would do well to honor and to learn from. We also recognize that the ancestors of many of us committed grave atrocities against the Wabanaki people that continue to reverberate even today. Rather than falling into shame or denial, our faith calls us to make reparations. One way to do this is by supporting sovereignty, not only to repair the wrongs of the past, but to build a future together of mutual respect, healing, and self determination.

We wonder why similar bills have not passed in previous legislative sessions. LD395 simply corrects flaws in the existing 1980 Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act (MICSA) and puts the Wabanaki Nation on equal footing with all of the other federally recognized tribes. Passing LD395 would also bring economic benefits not only to the tribes, but to rural Mainers, as outlined in a 2022 study by the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development.

It is well past time to right the wrongs of the past, and to include the Wabanaki in over 151 federal laws – as well as future legislation – that benefit other federally recognized tribes across the nation. This is the right thing to do.

Thank you.