

To: Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

From: April Fournier, 1241 Washington Ave, Portland ME 04103

Re: Support for LD 395, "An Act to Restore Access to Federal Laws Beneficial to the Wabanaki Nations" and LD 785 "An Act to Enact the Remaining Recommendations of the Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act"

Honorable members of the Judiciary Committee, Ya'at'eeh shi k'ei doo shi' dine'e', Shí éí April yinishyé, Honágháahnii nishłj, Fournier báhshíchíín, Ákót'éego diné asdzáán nishłj, T'ahdii kqłqł honiidłqł, Ahéhee'

Honorable members of the Judiciary Committee and welcome my friends and relatives. My name is April Fournier, I am from my mother's clan Honágháahnii, I am from my fathers clan Fournier, In this way I am a Dine' woman. Thank you and I am grateful to have this opportunity to speak with you today in support of LD 395 and LD 785

I hold many roles in my communities. I am a city councilor in Portland and I work with Native American communities all over the country in my role with Native Organizers Alliance. I have had the privilege to work and spend time with tribes and Native led organizations in many different states. I am a grateful guest here in the land of the Wabanaki. My tribal nation is over 2,000 miles away, but what holds consistent in our Indigenous way of being is that all things are related and we are not only responsible for our own people and lands, but for all people and lands. It is our ancestral responsibility to show up and to help our relatives whenever we can.

What is also true is that the Penobscot Nation, the Passamaquoddy Nation, the Mi'kmaq Nation and the Houlton Band of Maliseet are the first peoples of what is now called Maine. They are the original stewards, the first caretakers of this place we call home. The Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act, like so many other pieces of legislation crafted by non-Native governments, was designed to force the Tribal nations to give up their right to the self-governance, self-determination and independence enjoyed by the other 574 federally recognized tribes. LD 395 and LD 785 are critical steps to reversing the harms caused by the state of Maine and beginning the road to healing and reparation.

When this country was colonized the US Government made promises, most which have been broken, to the Native peoples of this land. Promises to provide resources, support and recognize our sovereign governments in exchange for the land and freedoms they took. Although I will never believe these treaties were made in good faith because this land was never the US Government's land to take and give back at a price, they are still an agreement.

As I travel to other Native communities around the country I see the impact of tribal nations receiving federal benefits. Housing opportunities, grant opportunities, tools that provide a

significant economic benefit to tribal communities to help lift and create greater equity with their neighbors. There is also funding for healthcare, inclusion in policies to protect our people who are disproportionately impacted by violence, mental health crises and poverty. And also the ability to recover the land that was taken.

We also have an ancestral responsibility to work to repair harm that has been done and improve conditions for our next generations. When we look at the full scope of what our Native Nations have endured and sacrificed to preserve our way of life, the very least the state governments and federal governments can do is work to create opportunities to correct the wrongs and create new conditions for all of our peoples to thrive.

Relatives, thank you for considering the bills before you today. I ask that you support the passage of LD 395 and LD 785 to restore self-determination, recognize Wabanaki sovereignty and restore the right to benefit from federal policy that is critical for the Nations' futures.

Ahe' hee' for your time and commitment to this work and our state.

April Fournier

She/Her

Dine'