



Testimony Before the joint Standing Committee on Judiciary
On LD 1626

“An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Task Force on Changes
to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act”
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Senator Carney, Representative Harnett, and members of the joint Standing Committee on Judiciary:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of LD 1626, an act to implement the recommendations of the Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act. My name is Barbara Brown and I live in Portland. I am here today on behalf of the Maine Unitarian Universalist State Advocacy Network, motivated by our faith tradition's dedication to justice, equity, and compassion in all human relations and to the inherent worth and dignity of all people.

The 1980 settlement implementing act has put the Wabanaki tribes in a category separate from all other federally-recognized tribes in the U.S. and has stifled the Tribes' right to self-determination, causing both cultural and economic hardship.

The tribes in the land we call Maine deserve the rights and powers ascribed to all other federally recognized Indian tribes. I believe this bill is not an instance of our state granting rights but rather restoring rights long due to the tribes. The Wabanaki are sovereign Nations and have the right to make their own decisions for themselves as to how to administer their communities in accordance with their own cultural practices, steward their natural resources, and improve their economic conditions.

The bill before you repeals or amends the 1980 Act so that current federal Indian law once again applies to the Wabanaki tribes. This bill restores Wabanaki jurisdiction in four primary areas which under the 1980 act have been suppressed: land acquisition, court jurisdiction, regulation of natural resources, and taxation. It brings Wabanaki sovereignty into equity with the rights of the other 570 federally recognized tribes in 49 states, a restoration which is long overdue.

In part through the provisions of over 150 federal Indian laws enacted during the period Maine has been the outlier, other states have built relationships with the tribes in their states that benefit the tribes, the surrounding non-Native rural communities, and their entire state. Passage of LD 1626 would give Maine the opportunity to build the same kind of relationship, bringing increased prosperity to the Wabanaki people, Maine's rural areas, and the state.

For all these reasons, I believe the State of Maine has a moral imperative to help restore the Wabanaki peoples' sovereignty and right to self-determination, and this Legislature has an opportunity both precious and pressing to provide equity and justice to the Wabanaki people. I urge you to seize this opportunity by voting Ought to Pass on LD 1626.

Thank you.