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Written Testimony in support of LD 780 and LD 395

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Just a year ago I didn't know anything about the fraught issue of tribal sovereignty, and if I had, I wouldn't have felt a personal stake in the matter.

But that all changed last summer when I spent several days on Indian Island with other educators learning about Wabanaki culture, history, and survivance. Nothing in my twenty years of teaching has impacted me so profoundly as those days on the Penobscot reservation. The experience was both gutting and galvanizing. I didn't realize how much we as a society and as individuals have suffered for being disconnected from indigenous wisdom and ways. We have lost the sense of being in right relation with the earth, with each other, and with ourselves. That loss degrades the lives of all Americans.

Once we know better, we have to do better. Although it may seem I have no immediate stake in this legislation, I know now that *all* Mainers stand to benefit from improving relations with our Wabanaki neighbors. Passage of LD 785 and LD 395 would be significant steps toward repairing past wrongs—and achieving fairness and equity so long denied.

This is unequivocally the right thing to do, for so many reasons. To name just a few, Harvard researchers project that restoring the full rights of sovereignty to the Wabanaki would be an economic boon not only to the tribes but to surrounding rural areas as well. This would also mitigate the crushing effects of child poverty in Wabanaki communities, which only perpetuates generational trauma and state-sponsored abuse of indigenous children throughout our history.

Finally, please, we need to acknowledge the Wabanaki's expertise in stewarding the land and natural resources. They know better than we do how to protect our woods and waters, so the more opportunities they have to guide us back into right relation with the natural world, the better for all.

Amidst the patriotic fanfare this year, I believe the best way we in Maine could mark the 250th anniversary of these United States is by making good on broken promises to those who have truly cherished this land and fought for this country from the beginning. So please vote YES on LD 785 and LD 395.

Thank you.