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**Testimony of the Maine Municipal Association
Neither For Nor Against**

LD 395 - An Act to Advance Self-determination for Wabanaki Nations

February 19, 2026

Sen. Carney, Rep. Kuhn and members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Rebecca Lambert, and I am providing testimony “neither for nor against” LD 395 on behalf of the Maine Municipal Association’s (MMA) elected 70-member Legislative Policy Committee (LPC). MMA is a nonpartisan, nonprofit member service organization and aims to help provide policy solutions that work for all residents in Maine. The LPC guides the advocacy efforts and establishes positions on bills of municipal interest.

Municipal leaders recognize the importance of self-governance and self-determination, as our roots are deeply intertwined with the Legislature’s long-standing support for home rule authority and trust that our residents have the good intentions necessary to chart their own courses. For that very reason, local officials understand and support the desire among members of Maine’s Wabanaki Nations to acquire the same rights and privileges as those extended to Tribal Nations in other states.

With respect to LD 395, municipal officials are most concerned about the potential for being required to address the demands and priorities of both the state and the Wabanaki Nations.

Absent a clear process in the bill that mandates the use of an evidence based and predictable process for protecting Maine’s natural resources, there exists a potential that future decisions and regulations could shift additional (and possibly significant) cost burdens onto communities. While municipal officials understand that the protection of the state’s natural resources is an investment in our communities and economic assets, Maine’s municipalities, and by extension property tax and fee payers, have already spent and continue to invest millions of dollars to build the infrastructure necessary to comply with existing state and federal clean air and water regulations.

For example, it is possible that more stringent and costly measures could be implemented that impact the operation of municipal infrastructure located upstream from trust lands. The reverse could also be true, as decisions made by tribes could make it more difficult for communities to meet established state standards. At the very least, the legislation should recognize the dual and potentially conflicting regulatory compliance requirements that may be placed on communities.

Further it is important to municipal officials that language is included in LD 395 that explicitly assigns regulatory responsibilities over municipalities to the state. Should the state want to defer to the tribal governments, then the Legislature should incorporate those proposals within their own regulatory framework. It is the only way to ensure consistency in enforcement among municipal entities. Additionally, if it is determined that more rigorous regulations are necessary, municipalities will need to



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be provided the time to implement new requirements, and more importantly, the technical and financial assistance necessary to avoid shifting additional burdens onto the property taxpayers.

In summary, the ability to discuss, recognize, and address impacts is an important part of the process of self-determination. Municipal officials encourage the inclusion of provisions that facilitate conversations among all the interested parties and ensure municipalities retain the authority to conduct business within their own boundaries, address the priorities of its residents, and mitigate increases placed on property taxpayers.

Thank you for considering the municipal perspective on this important legislation.