



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Testimony of Representative Laurie Osher in support of
**LD 395, An Act to Restore Access to Federal Laws Beneficial
to the Wabanaki Nations**

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and honorable members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Laurie Osher. I am proud to represent House District 25, which is most of Orono, located in the homeland of the Penobscot Nation. Thank you for the opportunity to speak in favor of **LD 395, An Act to Restore Access to Federal Laws Beneficial to the Wabanaki Nations**. While I will keep my remarks brief, I want to express my wholehearted support for this measure.

During my time in the Legislature, I have been proud to vote for bills that seek to recognize the sovereignty of the Wabanaki Tribes and begin to address the ways in which the Wabanaki have been prevented from accessing the same rights as other federally recognized tribes. LD 395 is critical to finally achieving those goals.

As the committee has heard, LD 395 is a long-overdue update to the 1980 Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act and the Aroostook Band of Micmacs Settlement Act. It would finally extend federal laws that apply to the other 570 federally recognized tribes to the Penobscot Nation, the Passamaquoddy Tribe, the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians, and the Mi'kmaq Nation.

The effect of the Wabanaki Nations' exclusion from federal programs and funding cannot be overstated. For 40 years, the Tribes have been denied access to public health resources, disaster relief funding, and authority to protect their lands under the Clean Water Act and the Clean Air Act, just to name a few examples.

Wabanaki leaders have tirelessly advocated for their people to simply be treated as equal to members of any other federally recognized tribe. While we have made some progress over the past several years, we have so much more work to do, and together with LD 785, LD 395 represents an opportunity to finally begin setting things right.

Thank you for your consideration.