

To: Joint Standing Committee on the Judiciary
From: Jackson Chadwick, Maine Youth for Climate Justice
Date: Thursday, February 19, 2026



RE: Testimony in Support of L.D. 395: An Act to Restore Access to Federal Laws Beneficial to the Wabanaki Nations

Dear Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and respected members of the Judiciary Committee,

Good morning. My name is Jackson Chadwick, and I am the Advocacy & Organizing Director for Maine Youth for Climate Justice (MYCJ), and I live in Bangor. MYCJ, part of the Wabanaki Alliance Coalition, supports youth under 30 in advocating for climate action and justice through legislative efforts, community involvement, and educational initiatives. Our members range from high school and college students to young adults in Maine's workforce.

On behalf of MYCJ and our members, I am testifying today in strong support of L.D. 395. This bill is about fairness and respect. Maine youth believe that climate justice is inseparable from Wabanaki self-determination. L.D. 395 is necessary.

Over the past 40 years, Congress has passed laws meant to support federally recognized tribes. Because of the Settlement Acts, Maine's Wabanaki Nations were left out of those laws unless they were specifically named — and often, they weren't. A 2019 report by Suffolk University Law School¹ found at least 151 cases in which the Wabanaki Nations were *not* specifically written into federal law, and therefore were unable to benefit. Among the over 151 federal laws and programs that the Nations cannot access are the Clean Water Act and the Clean Air Act. This limits their capacity to safeguard water quality, provide clean drinking water, and protect wildlife.

No other federally recognized tribes are treated this way, so why should the Wabanaki Nations *continue* to be treated in this manner?

Modernizing the Settlement Acts not only benefits the Wabanaki Nations but also many of our rural communities. Think of this as raising the ceiling. As is, the Settlement Acts are a low ceiling for the Wabanaki Nations. A 2022 analysis² by the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development found that tribal self-determination benefits the economies of both tribal and non-tribal communities. If we can't raise that ceiling, tribal self-determination is hampered, and future opportunities for tribal and non-tribal economic growth are prevented.

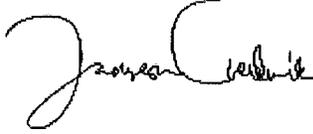
There is no meaningful reason for the Wabanaki Nations to be treated separately from all of the other federally recognized tribes in the United States.

¹ "Federal Laws Enacted After October 10, 1980, For the Benefit of Indians or Indian Nations." *Human Rights and Indigenous Peoples Clinic, Suffolk University Law School*. December 2019. <https://legislature.maine.gov/doc/3636>

² "Economic and Social Impacts of Restrictions on the Applicability of Federal Indian Policies to the Wabanaki Nations in Maine." *The Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development*. December 2022. <https://wabanakialliance.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/2022-12-2-Economic-Social-Impacts-Fed-Indian-Policies-to-Wabanaki-Nations-final.pdf>

On behalf of the youth and young adults MYCJ represents, please vote to pass L.D. 395.

Thank you for considering our testimony,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jackson Chadwick". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jackson" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Chadwick".

Jackson Chadwick
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