

Feb. 19th, 2026

Testimony in Support of LD 395, An Act to Restore Access to Federal Laws Beneficial to the Wabanaki Nations

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, Members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Luke Sekera-Flanders, I am a resident of Bangor, Maine and speaking on behalf of Community Water Justice, a network of impacted communities across Maine building awareness and grassroots power to protect the rights of water for people, the environment, and for future generations.

As tribal leaders have said today, sovereignty is already a matter of fact that can not be granted or taken away. It is the responsibility of conscientious leadership of this state to move forward and, respectfully, stop impeding or denying the Tribes' ability to exercise sovereignty.

The conditions that have denied Wabanaki Nations access to federal programs crafted leading up to the 1980 Settlement Act were not crafted with fairness nor justice in mind. These measures relied on appeals to fear of what might possibly happen if we had, as one Governor put it, "nations within a nation."

Looking broadly, time has shown that these fears were unwarranted. Since the end of the Termination Era of the 1950s and 60s, which saw federal and state governments, including Maine, attempt to dissolve tribal governments and completely erase the political existence of Indigenous peoples, tribal nations across the U.S. have flourished in all metrics, from health outcomes to environmental restoration.

It is unjust that the Wabanaki Nations within the borders of the State of Maine should be denied access to resources and mechanisms to exercise self-governance that all other federally recognized tribes have retained.

Wabanaki Nations have endured over 400 years of continuous encroachment, erasure, a disenfranchisement and acts of genocide. The weight of that history should not be lost on any of us as we look forward.

Let's enter a new era in this state and take decisive action to build a more just and prosperous future.

Thank you for your time.

Luke Sekera-Flanders