



February 19, 2026

Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

RE: LD 395, "An Act to Restore Access to Federal Laws Beneficial to the Wabanaki Nations"

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and members of the Committee on Judiciary,

My name is Emory Buco Harger, and I am the Director of Communications at the Maine Environmental Education Association (MEEA). I'm here today to voice my support for LD 395.

MEEA represents over 2,000 K-12 educators in public schools and community organizations in what is now called Maine. These educators provide immersive outdoor learning experiences and Wabanaki studies to youth in all 16 Maine counties and the Wabanaki Nations. We strive to honor and uplift the Wabanaki Nations, whose homelands we stand on now. The passing of LD 395 should not be in question, as it is not imposing anything new or unusual on the people of Maine, but instead it is putting us in line with every other state across the land we now call the United States. All other 574 federally recognized tribes have a strong and mutually beneficial relationship with the state inhabiting their homelands. Maine's restrictive relationship with the Wabanaki Nations is the one and only. Under the Maine Land Claims Settlements Act, the Wabanaki Nations are the only federally recognized tribes that need to be explicitly written into federal legislation.

This outdated law was passed nearly 46 years ago, and in that time, the Wabanaki Nations were restricted from no less than 151 federal laws that could have benefitted both tribal citizens and Maine residents. A report released last year from the Maine Center of Economic Policy stated clearly that modernizing the Settlement Act could create 2,700 new jobs in Maine and generate \$51 million in state and local tax revenue. The Wabanaki are not the only people suffering the impacts of these losses, Maine communities do as well. Passing LD 395 is how we strengthen relationships and empower one another.

This move to support the first peoples of our land is a move to support everyone that calls this land home. On behalf of the Maine Environmental Education Association, I strongly urge this committee to vote "Ought to Pass" on LD 395, and I thank you for your leadership on this critical issue.

Sincerely,

Emory Buco Harger

Director of Communications

Maine Environmental Education Association