



**APPALACHIAN
MOUNTAIN CLUB**
SINCE 1876

**Testimony of Eliza Townsend, Maine Conservation Policy Director
In support of
LD 395 *An Act to Restore Access to Federal Laws Beneficial to the Wabanaki Nations*
February 19, 2026**

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on the Judiciary, I am Eliza Townsend, Maine Conservation Policy Director for the Appalachian Mountain Club.

AMC's mission is to foster the protection, enjoyment and understanding of the outdoors. We have 6,200 members in Maine and own 127,000 acres of forestland in the 100-Mile Wilderness region of Piscataquis County, managed for multiple use including sustainable forestry, backcountry recreation, and environmental education.

We support LD 395.

Due to the 1980 Maine Indian Land Claims Settlement, the Wabanaki nations are unable to benefit from approximately 150 federal laws that apply to the 570 other federally recognized tribes. The Maine Implementing Act made the status of the tribes akin to municipalities, and its congressional counterpart, the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act specifies that the Maine tribes are excluded from federal law if it affects the application of Maine law. This has left the Wabanaki at a distinct disadvantage, excluded from provisions of the Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act, and the Violence Against Women Act and unable to access federal funds for health programs, disaster response, or COVID-19 impacts, to name a few examples. No wonder, then, that the Wabanaki experience poverty at a rate more than twice that for Maine overall, 29.11% vs. 14%.

This is an unacceptable situation. AMC recognizes that for the state as a whole to thrive, the Wabanaki people must thrive. We stand with the tribes in their pursuit of tribal sovereignty and the many benefits it will provide our indigenous neighbors, our natural resources, and the state of Maine. We will urge you later today to support LD 785 for that reason, but because efforts to revise the 1980 settlement have failed to date, we support this more narrow bill as well.

Your committee has the opportunity to address the wrongs included in the Maine Implementing Act. LD 395 would allow the Wabanaki tribes to benefit from any federal laws passed in the future that apply to all other federally recognized tribes. This is a reasonable and modest measure. While it will do nothing to address the opportunities lost in the past 46 years, including an estimated \$70 million in lost funding, it will set both the Wabanaki people and Maine on a better path.

We ask you to vote Ought to Pass.