

To: Sen. Carney, Rep. Kuhn, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary
From: Sandi McRae Duchesne, 478 Beechwood Avenue, Old Town, 04468 (Resident of Hudson)
Re: Support for LD 395, An Act to Restore Access to Federal Laws Beneficial to the Wabanaki Nations

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Sandi McRae Duchesne and I live in Hudson. I am testifying today in support of LD 395, a bill that will allow the Wabanaki Nations to benefit henceforth from all federal legislation that applies to nearly 600 recognized tribes in every other state. I view this as a matter of basic fairness and restitution. The original residents of the place we now call Maine have been ill-served and economically disadvantaged for nearly 50 years, due to Maine's failed policy of treating tribal governments like municipalities rather than sovereign nations. We can't go back in time to right the many wrongs of the past, but we can take action in the present to pass new and better legislation that creates a more even playing field, and allows the Wabanaki Nations to thrive alongside all other federally recognized tribes. When Maine's tribal governments are finally allowed to access federal funds and resources allocated by Congress to improve basic living standards and economic growth opportunities on tribal reservations and trust lands, new capital investment and higher incomes will create a ripple effect in the local economy, benefiting both native and non-native residents of surrounding communities. As the old saying goes, a rising tide raises all ships.

I'm gratified but not surprised to note that this bill has bipartisan sponsorship. We all understand that basic human principles we learned in childhood, like fair play and the importance of honoring one's promises, transcend party lines. The 1980 compact was originally signed in hopes of starting a more robust discussion of tribal-state relationships between equal partners. Instead, it has been manipulated by state government officials to keep the Wabanaki Nations frozen in time, and deprived of important resources they could leverage to benefit both Indigenous communities and their rural neighbors. Please take a meaningful step into the future by correcting an old, painful, and expensive mistake, and vote in favor of LD 395. Let's return all of Maine to the way life should be. Thank you.