

Testimony in support of
LD 395, An Act to Restore Access to Federal Laws Beneficial to the Wabanaki Nations &
LD 785 An Act to Enact the Remaining Recommendations of the Task Force on Changes to
the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act

Presented to the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary
February 18, 2026

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and esteemed members of the Legislature's Judiciary Committee, my name is Troy Jackson. It is great to be here with all of you today to testify in support of LD 395 and LD 785 - two measures I believe are long overdue. I also want to thank Senator Talbot Ross for bringing these measures forward.

As you know, I had the honor of serving as President of the Maine Senate and representing the good people of Aroostook County for more than two decades in the Legislature. This includes representing members of the Aroostook Band of Mi'kmaq. I have also had the privilege of working alongside and learning from the leaders of the Wabanaki Tribes as a presiding officer.

For too long, the state's relationship with the Wabanaki nation has amounted to nothing more than symbolic gestures and empty promises — and this is at the best of times. For much longer, the state's relationship with the Wabanaki people was far worse. In recent years, the Legislature has made great strides in repairing the fraught relationship between our governments. We've set up a commission to examine the 1980 Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act and convened for a Joint Convention of the Maine Legislature to hear from the Chiefs of the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians, Mi'kmaq Nation, Penobscot Nation, and the Passamaquoddy Tribe. We also passed laws to support economic development, improve access to clean drinking water, recognize the exclusive jurisdiction of tribal courts, enshrine protections for Wabanaki children and their families into state law

Yet, we've still fallen short of what we owe our indigenous neighbors when it comes to respecting tribal sovereignty and self-determination. That is something I carry with me even as my time in the Legislature has come to a close.

The time has come and passed for us to rectify our laws and honor the inherent sovereignty of the Wabanaki Nations. It is also time for the Wabanaki people to receive the benefits they deserve - the same federal benefits that the other 570 federally recognized tribes receive. It's time to pass LDs 395 and 785.

Thank you for your time today. I'd be happy to answer any questions.