



February 19th, 2026

Testimony in support of LD785: An Act to Enact the Remaining Recommendations of the Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act.

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and esteemed members of the Judiciary Committee.

My name is Eli Durand-McDonnell, I am from Bar Harbor, and I work as the Policy Director at Maine Youth Power, a youth-led youth movement working throughout rural and suburban Maine to win human dignity, equity and a liveable future for all. Maine Youth Power is also a proud member organization of the Wabanaki Alliance. Today, I am testifying on behalf of my organization and our members in support of LD785: An Act to Enact the Remaining Recommendations of the Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act.

At the start of this legislative session, we surveyed more than a hundred of our members from all across the state, asking what legislation they would like to see prioritized. As responses began to stream in, it soon became clear that the expansion of Wabanaki sovereignty was a top priority. Our members saw the urgent and long overdue need for Wabanaki Nations to determine their own futures and to benefit from crucial federal laws. Simultaneously, this sentiment is not just shared by young people—there is massive bipartisan support in the statehouse, across businesses and organizations, and within our neighborhoods that we need to rectify the antiquated Settlement Act which unfairly constricts the Wabanaki Nations.

As I noted in my introduction, and as echoed by our member responses, Maine Youth Power envisions a future with human dignity, equity, and a liveable future for all. In perfect alignment with that vision, LD785 would finally allow Wabanaki Nations the right to self-determination, and remove significant hurdles to a new era of growth. It's impossible to highlight every positive feature of this bill in three minutes, but as an organization focused on making sure young people thrive, we are especially passionate about the effect this bill would have on Wabanaki youth. As the Wabanaki Alliance notes, "Childhood poverty in Wabanaki communities ranges from 40% to 77%, compared to Maine's overall rate of 15%."¹ The economic ripple effect that would be created by passing LD785 would be crucial to addressing such a massive and unfair disparity affecting Wabanaki youth. We know it is time to act, and time to do the right thing. I urge you to support LD785.

Sincerely,
Eli Durand-McDonnell

¹ <https://www.wabanakialliance.com/ld-785-talking-points/>