



**APPALACHIAN
MOUNTAIN CLUB**
SINCE 1876

**Testimony of Eliza Townsend, Maine Conservation Policy Director
Appalachian Mountain Club**

**In Support of LD 785, *An Act to Enact the Remaining Recommendations of the Task Force on Changes to the
Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act***

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 785 to establish that the Passamaquoddy Tribe, the Penobscot Nation, and the Houlton Band of Maliseets enjoy the same "rights, privileges, powers, duties and immunities" as 570 other federally recognized tribes in the United States. Further, by ensuring that the tribes can benefit from the 151 federal laws passed since the 1980 settlement, LD 785 has the potential to bring much-needed resources to our state.

We recognize that the status of the Maine tribes under the 1980 settlement has led to significant conflict in the past four decades, particularly over issues of environmental protection. The Wabanaki make clear that their identity and culture are inseparable from the lands and waters that have sustained them for 10,000 years. We are confident that they can steward those resources as well as the State of Maine has done. We especially support the provisions of LD 785 that address the regulation of natural resources.

The 1980 settlement created a process for the tribes to expand their land holdings in Maine, and set aside federal funds for that purpose, but the tribes have not acquired the agreed-upon acreage. This bill addresses several obstacles so that the tribes can acquire more land, as agreed to by all parties nearly a half century ago.

No document is perfect. The United States Constitution, which has been amended more than two dozen times, is just one example. In 2026 it is appropriate to recognize the shortcomings of the 1980 Land Claims Settlement and to improve upon it. We ask you to support LD 785.

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