



Testimony in Support of:

**L.D. 785, An Act to Enact the Remaining Recommendations of the Task Force on
Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act**

by Gia Drew on behalf of EqualityMaine

February 19, 2026

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary,

My name is Gia Drew, I use she/her pronouns, and I am the Executive Director of EqualityMaine, which has been advocating on behalf of Maine's LGBTQ+ community since 1984. We strongly support L.D. 785 and its goal of restoring to the Wabanaki Nations many of the rights to self-determination enjoyed by other tribes.

For more than 40 years, the State of Maine has used the Settlement Acts to deny the Wabanaki Nations the same rights, powers, and privileges as the other 570 federally-recognized tribes in the United States. According to the 2019 research findings of the Human Rights and Indigenous Peoples Clinic at Suffolk University Law School, there have been more than 150 federal laws passed since 1980 from which the Wabanaki Nations and the State of Maine were not able to benefit due to the restrictions of the Settlement Acts.¹ Consequently, the Wabanaki Nations as well as their surrounding communities have not had the access to the economic development, health care, housing, environmental protections, and disaster response opportunities as all other federally-recognized tribes. In addition to being an affront to tribal sovereignty, this injustice has meant that the tribes suffer unnecessarily from significantly stifled economic development.

We urge you to support this bill, and to vote Ought To Pass on L.D. 785. It is well past time to implement Task Force recommendations and remove the barriers that prevent the Wabanaki Nations in Maine from exercising their inherent right to self-govern.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

¹ *Report on Federal Laws Enacted After October 10, 1980 for the Benefit of Indians or Indian Nations*, prepared by the Human Rights and Indigenous Peoples Clinic of Suffolk University Law School for the State of Maine Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act (Dec. 2019). <https://legislature.maine.gov/doc/3616>.