

February 19, 2026

To: Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee

From: Diane Oltarzewski, of Belfast, representing the Friends Committee on Maine Public Policy

Re: LD 785 An Act to Enact the Remaining Recommendations of the Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act

I am speaking today in support of LD 785, on behalf of the Friends Committee on Maine Public Policy. We are a statewide group of Quakers working for right relationship between Indigenous and non-Native citizens of Maine. We are aligned with the advancement of Wabanaki interests for the betterment of all who live in Maine.

With this latest, and we hope final, iteration of legislation embodying the recommendations of the 2019 Task Force, Maine again has the opportunity to free itself from misrepresentation of inherent Indigenous rights, and to restore the full authority and protection of Federal Indian Law as it pertains to federally-recognized Tribes and Nations in the US.

Several of us on the Friends Committee faithfully attended those day-long sessions of the Task Force in 2019, which met over a six-month period. At the outset, the non-Native members of the Task Force openly admitted to knowing virtually nothing about Federal Indian Law and they had many questions and concerns. As the weeks and months went by, as each topic was presented, experts consulted, and questions answered, each Task Force member became more comfortable, both with the proposed changes to the Implementing Act and with each other. The result was overwhelming agreement on all 22 recommendations to amend the state law – proof that when you take the time to understand the issues, and are able to see things from the point of view of the people impacted, minds and hearts are opened.

It is time to remove the barriers that have kept the Wabanaki and their rural Maine neighbors from the economic resurgence achieved by tribes across Indian Country. We appeal to each and every legislator to sustain this breakthrough of real justice, and honorable dealing – to clear the stale air that has been hovering over Maine for decades, and, with mutual respect and Tribal-State collaboration, breathe fresh, honest, hopeful air again. LD 785 ought to pass without exception. Thank you for your consideration.