

To: Joint Standing Committee on the Judiciary
From: Jackson Chadwick, Maine Youth for Climate Justice
Date: Thursday, February 19, 2026



RE: 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

Dear Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and respected members of the Judiciary Committee,

Good afternoon. My name is Jackson Chadwick, and I am the Advocacy & Organizing Director for Maine Youth for Climate Justice (MYCJ), and I live in Bangor. MYCJ, part of the Wabanaki Alliance Coalition, supports youth under 30 in advocating for climate action and justice through legislation, community, and education. Our members include high school and college students, as well as young Maine workers.

On behalf of MYCJ and our members, I am testifying today in strong support of L.D. 785. Similar in purpose to L.D. 395, L.D. 785 is also about respect and fairness for the Wabanaki Nations. If passed, this bill would implement the remaining recommendations of the 2019 Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act.

As I mentioned earlier, we believe that climate justice is inseparable from Wabanaki self-determination. The Settlement Acts didn't *just* result in a legal failure, but an environmental one, too. The Settlement Acts were supposed to provide a pathway for the Passamaquoddy Tribe and the Penobscot Nation to re-acquire thousands of acres of trust lands. To date, this hasn't happened for either tribe, nor did the Settlement Acts extend that option to the Houlton Band of Maliseets or the Mi'kmaq Nation in the first place.

In 2024, the Maine Legislature passed L.D. 2007¹, which included several of the consensus recommendations from the 2019 Task Force. The bill amended the Settlement Acts to give the Wabanaki Nations more opportunities to pursue and acquire conservation and trust lands without state or local government approval.

This change was welcomed, but it took 44 years to achieve. It highlights the broader issue of the status quo, where each of the Task Force's recommendations is considered separately or in small batches. And this is why L.D. 785 is so important. It will implement all of the remaining recommendations from the Task Force. It doesn't take a piecemeal approach but a fair and respectful one—one that matches the moral responsibility we owe to the tribal nations.

The Settlement Acts were designed to evolve²— not to remain static. When things are wrong, when things could be better, we have a responsibility as people to correct those wrongs and better the mistakes of the past. And we look to you, as legislators, to help make that happen.

¹ "Maine Enacts Bipartisan Bill to Help Wabanaki Nations Exercise Inherent Right to Self-Govern." *National Caucus of Environmental Legislators*. May 30, 2024.
<https://nccenenviro.org/articles/maine-enacts-bipartisan-bill-to-help-wabanaki-nations-exercise-inherent-right-to-self-govern/#:~:text=On%20April%2023%2C%20Maine%20enacted,of%20local%20and%20state%20governments>

² "Final Report Of the Tribal-State Work Group." 123rd Maine State Legislature, Second Regular Session. January 2008.
<https://legislature.maine.gov/doc/3086>

On behalf of the youth and young adults MYCJ represents, please vote to pass L.D. 785.

Thank you again for considering our testimony,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jackson Chadwick". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

Jackson Chadwick
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Maine Youth for Climate Justice
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