

Barbara Acosta
Trenton
LD 785

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

My name is Barbara Acosta. I am a resident of Trenton and a member of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Ellsworth. Our congregation is a member of the Wabanaki Alliance Tribal Coalition, and our ministry is united in support of the passage of 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 also one of the 500 members of the Maine UU State Advocacy Network (MUUSAN), which links Maine's 26 UU congregations in working for legislation that embodies those values. As Unitarian Universalists, we acknowledge that the Wabanaki people occupied this land we call Maine for over twelve thousand years, long before European settlers arrived. They cared for its rivers, lakes and forests in ways that we would do well to honor and to learn from. We also recognize that the ancestors of many of us committed grave atrocities against the Wabanaki people that continue to reverberate even today. Rather than falling into shame or denial, our faith calls us to make reparations. One way to do this is by supporting sovereignty, not only to repair the wrongs of the past, but to build a future together of mutual respect, healing, and self determination.

We wonder why similar bills have not been enacted once they passed in previous legislative sessions. LD785 would update the 1980 Settlement Act to repair the harms committed as a result of that flawed deal. Over the years since the Settlement Act was enacted, it is clear that not only the Wabanaki, but many rural Mainers, have suffered economically. Most egregiously, childhood poverty among the Wabanaki is substantially higher than among Maine's overall population. This is unconscionable. Enacting the reforms embedded in LD785 is well past due, and will help restore a fairer relationship between the state and the tribes. It is the right thing to do from both a moral and an economic perspective, and will benefit all Mainers. Thank you.