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THE MAINE SENATE
132nd Legislature

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**Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary on
LD 395, An Act to Restore Access to Federal Laws Beneficial to the
Wabanaki Nations**

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary: I am Senator Rick Bennett of Oxford, and I have the honor of serving 14 communities in Western Maine. I am proud to be a cosponsor of LD 395, “An Act to Restore Access to Federal Laws Beneficial to the Wabanaki Nations.”

Since 1980, the Wabanaki Nations have been the only tribes in the country that must be specifically written into every federal law. This status has meant that while all other tribes across the country have benefited from federal programs and assistance, the Passamaquoddy Tribe, the Penobscot Nation, the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians, and the Mi'kmaq Nation, have not.

For decades, every other tribe in our country has been able to fully utilize federal law immediately, while the Wabanaki Nations have faced barriers. They have struggled to recruit health care workers to their rural and isolated communities yet have been unable to access the programs in the federal Indian Health Care Improvement Act. They have been environmental stewards for generations but have been blocked from exercising authority over their own land under the Clean Air and Water Acts. These are issues of basic fairness.

LD 395 is carefully written to remedy this situation. It allows the Wabanaki Nations to access federal law in the same way as every other federally recognized tribe. At the same time, it preserves Maine's authority to regulate key areas. And it creates conditions for economic growth that will benefit both tribal citizens and neighboring rural communities.

For these reasons, I urge you to vote “Ought to Pass” on LD 395. Thank you.