

Alison Bligh  
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LD 785

My name is Alison Bligh, and I am testifying in support of LD785. For over 40 years Maine has used the Settlement Acts to deny Wabanaki Nations' authority to self-govern, standing in conflict with Federal Indian Law. The Settlement Acts as written have resulted in an exclusion of Wabanaki Nations and its citizens from accessing more than 150 federal laws for the benefit of tribal nations and has resulted in extensive litigation over varying interpretations of the acts, deepening a strain of tribal-state relations. This bill would bring the rights and authority of all four Wabanaki Nations (Mi'kmaq Nation, Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians, Passamaquoddy Tribe and Penobscot Nation) consistent with those of 570 other federally recognized tribes in the United States. I have respected and admired our state's ability to act as a trailblazer at the national level and believe we are looked to as such, which only deepens my disappointment that Maine has consistently lagged behind regarding indigenous rights and sovereignty leaving Wabanaki citizens to face the consequences of our inaction. It is well past time to make appropriate changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act, we can do so now by passing and implementing LD 785.