

Carrie Bolduc
Greene
LD 785

To the Members of the Maine Legislature:

I respectfully submit this testimony in support of LD 785, “An Act to Enact the Remaining Recommendations of the Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act.”

This bipartisan legislation thoughtfully addresses longstanding structural inequities in the implementation of the 1980 Settlement Acts that have limited the ability of the Wabanaki Nations to exercise the same inherent rights of self-government enjoyed by more than 570 other federally recognized tribes across the United States.

For over four decades, provisions of the implementing act have effectively constrained tribal self-determination by treating the Wabanaki Nations more like municipalities than sovereign nations. These constraints have blocked access to federal self-governance policies that have fueled economic and social progress for tribal nations elsewhere, resulting in persistent disparities in tribal income, health, opportunity, and community well-being.

LD 785 would implement the remaining consensus recommendations of the bipartisan task force created by the Legislature in 2019 to modernize state law. These recommendations — including clearer authority for tribal courts, natural resource management, taxation authority, and land-into-trust processes — will meaningfully advance tribal self-government and improve legal clarity in the state-tribal relationship.

This legislation is an economic and social win for all Mainers. Independent analyses project substantial increases in job creation, economic activity, and state and local tax revenues when tribal self-governance is restored to parity with other federally recognized tribes. These benefits extend beyond tribal communities into rural Maine, supporting broader prosperity throughout the state.

By enacting LD 785, the Legislature will honor Maine’s commitments to justice, equitable opportunity, and collaborative governance. I urge you to vote in support of LD785 and send a clear message that Maine will continue to strengthen relationships with the Wabanaki Nations based on respect, shared prosperity, and the recognition of sovereign rights.

Thank you for your careful consideration.