

GREATER BANGOR AREA BRANCH NAACP

P. O. BOX 245 BANGOR, ME 04402

To: Sen. Carney, Rep. Kuhn, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

From: Athena Bryce, President, Greater Bangor Area Branch NAACP, PO Box 245, Bangor, Maine 04402

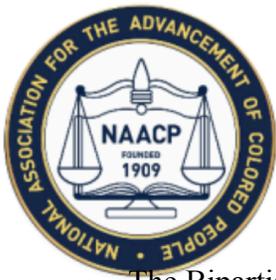
Re: Support for LD 785, An Act to Restore Access to Federal Laws Beneficial to the Wabanaki Nations

Sen. Carney, Rep. Kuhn and members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Athena Bryce and I live in Bangor. I am testifying on behalf of Greater Bangor Area Branch NAACP. I am here to testify in support of LD 785.

The Bangor NAACP is writing this testimony to rally behind the Wabanaki Alliance following its longstanding pursuit of LD 785. We would like to first thank Senator Talbot Ross, House Minority Leader Faulkingham, and all other co-sponsors of the bill for their support and significant contributions to the pursuit of this bill.

As the NAACP, we stand with the Wabanaki Alliance and acknowledge that the passage of LD 785 will repeal the impact of the 1980 Indian Claims Settlement Act, which has hindered the ability of the federally recognized Tribal Nations in the state of Maine to operate as sovereign nations as they all should. Based on the recommendations of the Bipartisan task force put together by the State of Maine, this bill addresses root issues that have blocked the Wabanaki Nations from accessing all of the federal self-determination policies that helped 570 other tribes create jobs and boost their economic growth significantly, as against federally recognized tribes in the State of Maine.

According to research conducted by Harvard, tribal self-government would boost Maine's annual GDP by \$330 million, create over 2,700 job opportunities, most of which would be filled by non-tribal rural Mainers, and generate \$39 million in state and local tax revenue each year. This goes to say that LD 785 is not only in the best interest of the Wabanaki Nations, but also in the best interest of the State.



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The Bipartisan Task force made 22 recommendations, many of which are addressed in LD 785, stating that “We, the Members of the One Hundred and Twenty-ninth Legislature now assembled in the First Regular Session, on behalf of the people we represent, take this opportunity to recognize that the Maine tribes should enjoy the same rights, privileges, powers, and immunities as other federally recognized Indian tribes within the United States” They also state that, the state of Maine is not exempt to federal laws passed.

This being said, we implore and encourage you, our dear leaders, to vote in favor of this bill, which would recognize the human dignity of the federally recognized tribes in the state of Maine. This bill changes a lot for the Wabanaki Nations, economically and culturally. It helps eradicate childhood poverty in the Tribal Nations, which currently ranges between 40%- 77% as compared to the state of Maine's overall rate of 15%. This bill changes a lot.

Thank you for your time, and we hope that you will make the decision today to be part of the economic and social justice this bill will bring.

Please vote Ought to Pass on LD 785.

Sincerely,
Athena Bryce

Athena Bryce

President, Greater Bangor Area Branch NAACP

The NAACP is a 501(c)4 nonprofit organization