

Testimony in Support for L.D. 395, An Act to Restore Access to Federal Laws Beneficial to the Wabanaki Nations

February 19, 2026

To the Honorable Senator Anne Carney, the Honorable Representative Amy Kuhn, and Distinguished Members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Anne D. (Andy) Burt and I live in Edgecomb. I am a retired environmental and social justice program director, and a long-time member of the Friends (Quaker) Committee on Maine Public Policy, which for more than three decades has supported a right and just relationship between the State of Maine and the Wabanaki nations. **I am writing as an individual in strong support of LD 395.**

Two extensively researched reports offer compelling data and stories to support passage of this legislation:

- Suffolk University researchers released a comprehensive report in 2019 that documented more than 150 federal laws that could have benefited the health and welfare of Wabanaki nations, but due to restrictions in the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act (MICSA), Wabanaki nations were unable to access those benefits.
- In a 2022 report — *Economic and Social Impacts of Restrictions on the Applicability of Federal Indian Policies to the Wabanaki Nations in Maine* — a research team from the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development/Harvard Kennedy School further documented the harsh economic and social consequences of MICSA. For example, Wabanaki nations saw just 9% growth in personal income compared to 61% for citizens in 570 federally recognized tribes (gaming and non-gaming), in large part due to restrictions imposed by MICSA. Also while these other tribes enjoyed an economic boom, Maine annually left on the table about \$369 million in Gross Domestic Product and tax revenues, and more than 2700 jobs, half of which would likely be filled by non-Native neighbors of Wabanaki nations.

I personally wanted to know more about the economic success stories documented in the Harvard report and so I have continued to research and read extensively about current tribal economic development and business partnerships with non-Native communities in the weekly publication *Tribal Business News*. Some common truths I have gleaned so far:

- The seeds for economic prosperity and social well-being in tribal communities and effective tribal-state relations across Indian Country are **respect for inherent tribal sovereignty and expanded tribal self-governance capabilities**,
- While a majority of Indian tribes have government-regulated gaming operations to produce income that supports tribal government services, health and educational programs **tribes today are creating economic development initiatives and corporations to diversify their income streams to assure economic stability.**

- Recognizing the benefits, many **states and municipalities are proactively reaching out to tribal governments within their states to create partnerships for** economic development initiatives, natural resources management, environmental and public health programs, etc.

By enacting LD 395, the Maine legislature and governor could open the door to new opportunities for economic prosperity and beneficial partnerships for the Wabanaki nations and Maine people. Wabanaki nations would gain access to laws and benefits that have brought prosperity and improved healthcare, education and tribal government services to the 571 other federally recognized tribes and the states in which they live. Bottom line: passage of LD 395 is a win-win for all.

As someone who has sat at the Wabanaki Alliance information table in many geographically Maine communities and engaged in conversation with hundreds of Maine citizens of all ages and political persuasions about the history of MICSA and current legislation to right the wrongs of the past, I feel confident saying that voting **OUGHT TO PASS on LD 395** would reflect the will of the Maine people...And, most importantly, it is clearly what the Wabanaki nations and their citizens want as well. Let's focus our minds and hearts on the promising possibilities for a brighter future that enactment of LD 395 could bring to us all.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne D. Burt

Anne Burt
Edgecomb
LD 395

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While a majority of Indian tribes have government-regulated gaming operations to
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