

Support for L.D. 785, “An Act to Enact the Remaining Recommendations of the Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act”

February 19, 2026

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

I am Anne D. (Andy) Burt, a long-time advocate for environmental and social justice and a member of the Friends (Quaker) Committee on Maine Public Policy, which focuses its advocacy on supporting a just and right relationship between the State of Maine and the Wabanaki nations. I live in Edgecomb. I am writing to request that you **unanimously vote OUGHT TO PASS on LD 785**.

For 40 years since the enactment of the 1980 Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act (MICSA), Wabanaki peoples and the State of Maine have been in a contentious relationship, often ending up in court at great expense to both parties. Terms of MICSA also have placed Wabanaki nations in an economically and socially disadvantaged position, unable to access many of the health, safety and sovereignty benefits accorded to the 571 other US tribes under federal law.

Thanks to a 2019 six-month intensive and collaborative process involving Wabanaki tribal chiefs, state legislators, representatives of state agencies, and tribal attorneys, a comprehensive bill with 22 consensed recommendations was created to amend MICSA and to establish a new tribal-state relationship built on respect for and recognition of Wabanaki sovereignty and self-determination. (I sat in the Judiciary chamber for most of the Task Force meetings and witnessed a transformation around the table as Wabanaki and non-Native leaders listened carefully and learned from one another.) While that omnibus bill to enact the 22 recommendations sadly wasn’t enacted, over the past five years some of those Task Force recommendations have been.

Now this legislature can complete that Task Force effort, begun in 2019, by passing LD 785 and enacting the remaining bi-partisan recommendations. This morally just action would not only honor the inherent sovereignty of Wabanaki nations and respect their right to self-governance, but also would open doors to benefits, already accessible to the other federally recognized tribes, that can contribute to improving economic prosperity and social welfare for the Wabanaki nations and their rural neighbors (Such has been the case since 1989 for many other federally recognized tribal communities and their non-Native neighbors documented in the 2022 Harvard report “*Economic and Social Impacts of Restrictions on the Applicability of Federal Indian Policies to the Wabanaki Nations in Maine.*”)

I urge you to **unanimously support LD 785** and make our history going forward one that we all — Mainers and Wabanaki citizens— can be proud of.

Respectfully submitted with gratitude for your service to Maine

Anne Burt
Edgecomb
LD 785

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