

To: Committee on Judiciary
From: Hadley Couraud // Norway, ME
Date: February 18, 2026

RE: Testimony in support of LD785, “An Act to Enact the Remaining Recommendations of the Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act”

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and members of the Committee on Judiciary,

My name is Hadley Couraud, I work in river restoration, and I live in a rural town in Maine. I am testifying in wholehearted support of LD785. Since moving to Maine eight years ago, I have worked in the conservation sector. For this work I have traveled and met Mainers from Grand Isle to Brownfield, Jackman to Machias, and countless areas in between. I have always been struck by the pride, identity, and care that so many citizens take in the land and waters of Maine. There is a land ethic in Maine that is remarkable to witness.

There is also a chilling history of ongoing injustices perpetuated against the Wabanaki Nations, whose relationship to this land and water goes back to time immemorial. There would be no “Maine” in which to take pride and hold identity, where it not for the Penobscot Nation (Panawahpskeweya), Passamaquoddy Tribe (Peskotomuhkatiyik), Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians (Wolastoqiyik), and the Aroostook Band of Mi’kmaq – as well as the Abenaki and other tribal communities.

Maine receives great attention from around the country and the world. With eyes on us, Maine cannot hope to be a leader in the fight to adapt and find solutions to climate change and protect the incredible natural resources and environments that define this State, without the Wabanaki, from whom we have so much to learn.

It is not only our environment we need to protect – it is Wabanaki children who are bearing the brunt of the failures of the Settlement Act, and it is Mainers who see their tax dollars going to the State fighting against sovereignty. Enacting these recommendations is something that an overwhelming number of Mainers support – we have seen this time and time again, each time a bill comes through that attempts to keep taking steps towards Wabanaki sovereignty.

Please, be courageous, choose to support LD785 to restore inherent and legal rights to the Wabanaki and their communities. We all stand to benefit and heal.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my testimony.

Respectfully,
Hadley Couraud