

Marvin Ellison
Portland
LD 395

As convener of the Wabanaki Allies Working Group at the First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ in South Portland, I urge the members of the Joint Judiciary Committee to support the passage of LD 395, which will put the Wabanaki Nations on equal footing with all other federally recognized tribes. This bill will help rectify a very unfortunate consequence of the 1980 Maine Indian Claim Settlement Act, which has blocked the Wabanaki from benefitting from a host of federal laws and programs that have been enacted since then. While other tribes have experienced both job growth and enhanced services from 1980 to the present, the tribal communities in Maine have struggled to build momentum for economic and social development, in large part, as the 2022 Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development analyzes, because the 1980 Settlement Act has not been modernized to clear the way for tribal access to federal benefits, unlike the more than 540 other tribes across the U.S. Fixing this troubling flaw in the 1980 Settlement Act is the right thing to do, the fair thing to do, and the economically wise thing to do, both for the benefit of the tribes and for the benefit of the entire State of Maine. I encourage your efforts to help secure passage of LD 395. Thank you.