

Brenda Franey
South Portland
LD 785

February 13, 2026

TO: The Committee on Judiciary

REGARDING: Public Hearing on LD 785

I am writing in support of LD 785 – An Act to Enact Recommendations on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act.

This legislation proposes to implement many of the 22 consensus recommendations reached by a bipartisan task force in 2020 tasked to review the 1980 Maine Indian Claims Settlement law's effectiveness. The recommendations cover tribal court jurisdiction; hunting, fishing and natural resource regulation on tribal land; taxation authority; and trust land acquisition. These changes would bring the rights and authority of all four Wabanaki Nations (Passamaquoddy Tribe, Penobscot Nation, Mi'kmaq Nation, and Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians) in line with the other 570 federally recognized tribes in the United States.

For more than 40 years, Maine, has treated the Wabanaki Nations as akin to municipalities, rather than as sovereign nations with rights and powers under federal Indian law held by the other federally recognized tribes in all other U.S. States. According to a study by Harvard in 2023, achieving parity with the other federal tribes would lead to significant job creation and greater economic development opportunities for the Wabanaki Nations AND their rural neighbors in Maine. The bill also includes a requirement to create a resolution process for settling disputes between the state and the Wabanaki Nations.

As a member of the Wabanaki Ally Team at First Parish Unitarian Universalists in Portland, we believe in restorative justice for our Wabanaki neighbors and friends. And, I hope that this committee also believes in restorative justice. Thank you for your consideration and also your service to the state of Maine.

Brenda Franey
South Portland