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LD 395

I am writing to encourage all Maine legislators to support the passage of LD 395 - An Act to Restore Access to Federal Laws Beneficial to the Wabanaki Nations. For over 40 years, the Wabanaki Nations have been sidelined by an outdated legal framework that forces them to fight for benefits every other federally recognized tribe receives automatically. LD 395 is a matter of fundamental fairness, modernizing the 1980 Settlement Acts to ensure the Wabanaki are finally treated as equals. By removing the unique requirement that they be explicitly named in every federal law, Maine can rectify decades of exclusion and ensure these Nations have the same self-determination rights as the other 570 tribes across the country.

The benefits of this legislation extend far beyond tribal lands; LD 395 is a proven economic catalyst for all of Maine. According to Harvard research, removing jurisdictional barriers allows tribes to access federal programs and funding that have historically generated thousands of jobs and hundreds of millions in economic activity elsewhere. By empowering the Wabanaki to invest in their own communities, we fuel growth in rural Maine, creating a "win-win" scenario where tribal self-sufficiency drives regional prosperity.

Beyond the economy, this bill is a critical investment in public health and safety. For too long, the Wabanaki have been blocked from over 150 federal laws, including the Stafford Act for disaster relief and the Indian Health Care Improvement Act for medical recruitment. Passing LD 395 ensures the Nations can effectively combat the opioid crisis, protect women from domestic violence, and steward Maine's natural resources. With broad bipartisan support from across the political spectrum, it is time to move past decades of missed opportunities and embrace a more secure, equitable future for all Mainers.