

Janine Georgette
Juneteenth Downeast
LD 785

To: Sen. Carney, Rep. Kuhn, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on
Judiciary

From: Janine “JG” Georgette, Director, Juneteenth Downeast, 77 Beechland Rd,
Ellsworth, ME 04605

Re: Support for LD 785, An Act to Advance Self-determination for Wabanaki
Nations

Sen. Carney, Rep. Kuhn and members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Janine
“JG” Georgette. I am testifying on behalf of Juneteenth Downeast. I am here to testify
in support of LD 785.

Recognition of the inherent sovereignty of Wabanaki Nations by the State of Maine is
long overdue. As inhabitants and caretakers of the land now called Maine for well
over 10,000 years, Wabanaki Nations have both the right and the responsibility to be
self determining. As explained in the 22 task force recommendations outlined in the
2022 Harvard study by Joseph Kalt, Amy Besaw Medford and Jonathan B. Taylor,
Wabanaki Nations have been consistently disadvantaged by the 1980 Maine Indian
Claims Settlement Acts (MICSAs). Furthermore, Wabanaki Nations, the State of
Maine, and rural inhabitants of all backgrounds, have been denied avenues for
economic development as a result of the failure to address these issues long before
now.

You are hearing from many organizations and individuals on the details of these
issues in support of LD 785, all of them vitally important. Juneteenth Downeast
would like to particularly stress the impacts on economic development, and the
impacts on children, that are the long lasting effects of MICSAs. The problematic
consequences of MICSAs may have been unanticipated at the time, but they are well
documented now.

Wabanaki Nations and surrounding rural communities have not experienced the
strong 61% growth of other federally recognized tribes and their surrounding
communities over the last 46 years, with only 9% growth here in Maine over the same
period of time.

Childhood poverty in Wabanaki communities ranges from 40% to 77%, compared to
Maine’s overall rate of 15%.

These are inexcusable impacts of MICSAs, and it is time for this situation to be
addressed. Enacting LD 785 will be a strong beginning toward bringing the State of
Maine into alignment with the rest of the country in tribal/state relations, and in
repairing the harms of the last 46 years.

Thank you for your time. Please vote Ought to Pass on LD 785,

Sincerely,
Janine “JG” Georgette
Director, Juneteenth Downeast