

THE FRIENDS COMMITTEE ON MAINE PUBLIC POLICY

February 19, 2026

To: Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

From: Shirley Hager, 129 Chesterville Hill Road, Chesterville, ME 04938
Member, Friends Committee on Maine Public Policy (FCMPP) and Clerk of FCMPP's Committee on Tribal-State Relations

Re: **Support for L.D. 395, An Act to Restore Access to Federal Laws Beneficial to the Wabanaki Nations**

In testifying in support of L.D. 395, I speak on behalf of the Committee on Tribal-State Relations of the Friends (Quaker) Committee on Maine Public Policy, a statewide advocacy group. For over thirty years, one of our primary goals has been to support a right and just relationship between the State of Maine and our Wabanaki neighbors.

L.D. 395 would enable the Wabanaki Tribes in what we now call Maine to access certain federal laws benefiting Tribes; laws that are available to the other 571 federally recognized Indigenous Nations in the country. According to terms dictated by the 1980 Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act, clear access to these laws is denied the Wabanaki unless each Tribe can manage to be specifically named in the law, a near-impossible feat to achieve. A Suffolk University report from 2019 found that since 1980 the Wabanaki in Maine have missed out on the benefits of over 150 bills passed by Congress intended for Tribal health, safety, welfare and self-determination. These same bills have resulted in Tribes in other states achieving an over 60% growth in per capita income, while Wabanaki Tribes achieved only a 9% growth in the same period according to a recent Harvard study.* Notably these bills, in creating access to federal resources, would also have brought economic and social benefits to the rural areas surrounding existing Tribal communities. Also notably, this bill excludes federal tribal gaming laws, stipulating that the Wabanaki Nations would be subject to state gaming laws.

Health, safety, prosperity, self-determination, a hopeful future for our children: aren't these goals we all strive for? Yet here in Maine we have laws that systematically *and* systemically place obstacles in the paths of our Wabanaki neighbors, preventing them from pursuing these goals for themselves. Surely, we have reached a point in this State where our collective conscience cannot allow this egregious situation to continue.

The Tribal-State Relations Committee of the Friends Committee on Maine Public Policy strongly urges you to unanimously vote "ought to pass" on L.D. 395. Let us remove one more obstacle to a sustainable, more prosperous future for our Wabanaki neighbors, and for us all. Thank you.

**Economic and Social Impacts of Restrictions on the Applicability of Federal Indian Policies to the Wabanaki Nations in Maine: Joseph P. Kalt, Amy Besaw Medford and Jonathan B. Taylor, The Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development, Harvard Kennedy School, December 2022.*

Shirley Hager
Friends Committee on Maine Public Policy
LD 395

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