



Testimony before the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary  
**LD785 An Act to Enact the Remaining  
Recommendations of the Task Force on Changes to the  
Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act**  
February 19, 2026

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and Members of the Committee:

I am the Rev. Dr. Stephen Hastings from Winthrop. I am the Chair of the Social Action Committee of the Maine Conference United Church of Christ. We are about 15,000 people from around 138 church congregations, known in most towns as “the Congregational Church.” I am testifying on behalf of the Maine Conference UCC **in support of LD 785** as “ought to pass.”

Since 2022, we have advocated for ongoing commitment and action to improve all manner of affairs pertaining to the sovereignty, self-determination, self-sufficiency and cultural identity of the Tribes in Maine. At our Maine Conference UCC Annual Meeting in 2022 we adopted our own **Resolution of Support for Tribal Sovereignty in Maine**, specifically resolving to “support the consensus recommendations in the January 2020 report of the *Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act* and take appropriate action, including legislative advocacy, as encouraged by the Wabanaki Alliance and Wabanaki Tribal Government to have the consensus recommendations become law.”

We all know the importance of the *Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act* in restoring Tribal Sovereignty and cultural identity or, as experience and studies have shown, holding back from achieving all that could and rightly should be achieved for the restoration of indigenous people’s full and free way of life. In fact, there is reason to believe all Maine benefits from strong Tribal identity and well-being; but, first and foremost this a moral matter of restorative justice, and conscience compels us to do all we can, as quickly as we can, doing what is right for the Tribes in Maine.

There is a story in the Bible (Leviticus 25) describing an event called the Jubilee that occurred every 50 years. During the Jubilee, property that had been bought and sold in the previous 50 years reverted back to it’s original owner, reconnecting them to their ancestral lands as their place of identity and well-being. Let there be something more of Jubilee for the Tribes of Maine by passing LD 785.

Submitted by,

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