

Shemaya Laurel
Gouldsboro
LD 785

Committee on Judiciary From: Shemaya Laurel, Gouldsboro, Maine Re: Support for LD 785, An Act to Advance Self-determination for Wabanaki Nations and Support for LD 395, An Act to Restore Access to Federal Laws Beneficial to the Wabanaki Nations

Intro: Sen. Carney, Rep. Kuhn and members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Shemaya Laure and I live in Gouldsboro. I am testifying in support of LD 785 and LD 395.

Please vote Ought to Pass on both LD 785 and LD 395. Wabanaki sovereignty is inherent to the Wabanaki Nations. Since the 1980 Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act, Maine state law has not reflected this reality. LD 785 and LD 395, taken together, will work to bring the state legal structure into accord with both the inherent sovereignty of the Wabanaki Nations, and with federal law across the country as it relates to federally recognized tribes.

Passage of these two bills is very important on a practical level for numerous reasons. High among those are:

- economic benefits for Wabanaki Nations and for surrounding rural communities
- availability of medical care, through such things as benefits of the Indian Healthcare Improvement Act
- timely disaster response as provided by the Stafford Act
- environmental protection by the communities who have been stewarding this land for thousands of years, caring for it in ways that make the well-being of the land, looking forward for generations, the highest of priorities. Because we, settlers and Wabanaki peoples, are part of the land, and as the land and waters go, so go the rest of us.

I understand that some of these issues can and have been dealt with individually. But how much has gone through the cracks because of that laborious process? How much federal legislation that automatically applies to the 570 other federally recognized tribes has been missed out on by the Wabanaki Nations and by the people of Maine overall?

Furthermore, I remain deeply upset that it required *seven years* for the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) to come into effect in Maine. How many more women died or were grievously injured by violent individuals who might have been stopped in those intervening years? For this reason alone, LD 395 is critically important. VAWA is now law, including in Maine. But as with healthcare and disaster response, it should not take so long, and the human cost of those delays is immense.

For all of these reasons, I urge you to vote Ought to Pass for both LD 785 and LD 395.

Thank you very much for your time.

Respectfully,
Shemaya Laurel
Gouldsboro