

February 19, 2026

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and members of the Committee on Judiciary,

My name is Kaya Lolar, and I am a citizen of the Panawahpskek Nation. I am here today to testify in support of LD 395.

During this session, I have the honor, alongside Sage Phillips, of coordinating the Wabanaki Policy Youth Initiative, a vast and growing group of Wabanaki and non-Wabanaki youth that are driven to see full sovereignty for the Wabanaki Nations become a reality. A group of youth, 14 to 25, that spend their evenings after work and school learning the ins and outs of the legislative system so that they can become better allies to their neighbors, stronger advocates for their people. They take the time to educate themselves, to show up and speak out (even on school vacation), and to build community across these homelands we all now share, so that their generation will not be ignored, like so many were before them.

As Wabanaki youth, we see the plaque on the third floor of this building honoring the Mayflower's expedition, the start of the genocide on Indigenous peoples. We see the slideshow screened on repeat in the Welcome Center downstairs, glazing over the contributions of our ancestors to this land and failing to even recognize our people by name, and we know that this building, meant to uphold and protect the will of the people, wasn't meant for our people. Yet we show up anyway.

Federally, we are recognized as sovereign nations, yet unlike any other Indigenous nation, the Wabanaki Nations would each need to be explicitly written into federal laws in order for them to apply. Our welfare and governance are held in the hands of the state of Maine, where our two tribal representatives are non-voting members of the legislature. Maine was founded on the principle of leadership, but it has been surpassed by all other states when it comes to relationships with their neighboring tribal nations.

The youth of the Wabanaki Policy Youth Initiative are here today fighting for a level of sovereignty that should have been seen by their parents, and their parents before that. The passage of LD 395 will address over 40 years of missed opportunities, and I strongly and respectfully urge this committee to vote "Ought to Pass."

Kci woliwoni,

Kaya Lolar