



February 19, 2026

Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

RE: LD 785, “An Act to Enact the Remaining Recommendations of the Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act”

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

My name is Kaya Lolar and I am the Director of Policy & Wabanaki Studies at the Maine Environmental Education Association (MEEA). I am also a proud citizen of the Panawahpskek Nation. I am here today to voice my support for LD 395.

MEEA represents over 2,000 Maine educators—classroom teachers and community-based educators—who provide immersive environmental and outdoor learning experiences for youth. We work hard to ensure that all students in what we now call Maine have access to a strong and holistic environmental education. We also know that no environmental education is complete without the foundational knowledge of the first stewards of our land, and we strive to honor and uplift the Wabanaki Nations, whose homelands we stand on now.

Additionally, we have a right, as representatives of the education field, to ensure the health and wellbeing of our children first and foremost. The rate of childhood poverty is anywhere from two to five times higher in Wabanaki communities than it is on average across the state. This is unacceptable. None of our children should be facing the impacts of an outdated Settlement Act. Because of this law, Wabanaki tribal governments are strikingly underfunded and jurisdictionally constrained relative to their tribal counterparts elsewhere in the U.S. These constraints have resulted in higher unemployment rates, child poverty rates, and lower education attainments compared to Maine communities as a whole.

Removing the barriers severely hindering the Wabanaki Nations would not only benefit the Wabanaki but so many of their Maine neighbors too, especially in rural areas. The bipartisan task force that convened in 2019 took great time and care to compile their list recommendations. At MEEA, we strongly urge the Committee to honor these well-vetted conclusions and vote “Ought to Pass” on LD 785. Thank you for your leadership on this critical issue.

Sincerely,

Kaya Lolar

Director of Policy & Wabanaki Studies

Maine Environmental Education Association