



Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on the Judiciary, my name is Lisa Margulies, I serve as Vice President of Public Affairs, Maine, for Planned Parenthood of Northern New England, and I am pleased to submit testimony in support of LD 785.

PPNNE provides comprehensive reproductive and sexual health care to approximately 10,000 patients per year in Maine at four health centers located in Biddeford, Portland, Sanford, and Topsham, in addition to online via telehealth. People turn to us for affordable, high-quality care including wellness exams, birth control, disease testing and treatment, cancer screenings, immunizations, gender-affirming care, abortion care, as well as a spectrum of primary and behavioral health care services.

As a mission driven health care provider, we fundamentally believe everyone should be able to access affordable, high quality sexual and reproductive health care in their communities, no matter where they live or how much money they make, and we advocate for policies that help make this vision a reality. All people deserve to access comprehensive reproductive health care, including abortion and gender-affirming care, free from shame, stigma, and intimidation. We see everyone who comes to us regardless of ability to pay, and in a typical year, we provide more than \$1.25 million dollars in free and discounted care to our communities in Maine. For many, we are their only access to the health care system.

PPNNE has strongly supported this body's efforts to address our state's current and historic racial inequities, the impact of which reverberate throughout the state, including in the field of public health. LD 785 represents a vital opportunity for the State of Maine to fundamentally realign its relationship with the Wabanaki Nations, correcting long-standing historical inequities by recognizing the tribes' inherent rights to self-governance.

For more than four decades the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act, regardless of initial intent, has stood as an obstacle to the ability of the tribes to exercise their fundamental rights, barring them from benefiting from the more than 151 Federal laws passed to expand Native American sovereignty since 1980. In 2019, the 129th Legislature began the process of remedying this historic injustice by establishing the Bipartisan Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act, which issued a report the following year containing 22 consensus recommendations.¹ In the intervening years, subsequent legislatures have utilized this report and worked tirelessly across party lines to enhance the Tribal Sovereignty of the Wabanaki people. By adopting the Task Force's remaining consensus recommendations, LD 785 would finally rectify this gross historical inequity and place the tribes in Maine on equal footing with the other 570 federally recognized tribes in 49 other states.



The rights to self-determination and self-governance are fundamental to our conceptions of human rights and liberty and must apply to all people. This legislation is an important next step in the process of restoring the inherent rights of the Passamaquoddy Tribe, the Penobscot Nation, Mi'kmaq Nation, and the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians to self-govern within their respective territories in accordance with the same federal laws that generally govern tribal lands elsewhere in the United States. LD 785 allows the tribes to determine their communities' futures on their native lands without interference from the State.

We must also acknowledge that the denial of self-governance for tribes is inextricably linked to the denial of reproductive autonomy embedded in the history of the State of Maine and its relations with Maine tribes. Reproductive oppression in Maine has taken many forms, but at its core is the denial of self-determination and agency. Forced sterilization, child apprehension, forced evacuation, and the total and complete loss of decision-making about one's health and body are real and painful chapters of our history. Today, reproductive oppression is more insidious, but we do not have to look far to see how laws aimed at restricting access to reproductive and sexual health care continue to harm.

To help right these wrongs, we support and advocate for reproductive justice, which is broadly understood as "the complete physical, mental, spiritual, political, social, and economic wellbeing of women and girls."ⁱⁱ Put simply, reproductive justice is the human right to have personal bodily autonomy, have children, not have children, and parent children in safe and sustainable communities. Indigenous communities have always been a central part of the reproductive justice movement.

The road to reproductive justice in Maine runs through LD 785 and the right to self-determine and self-govern for Maine tribes. Over the course of nearly a decade, Maine legislators have worked towards a shared goal, united in their belief that Maine tribes should have the right to self-govern without state interference. I urge the members of this committee vote "Ought to Pass" on LD 785.

ⁱ Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act, *129th Legislature*, January 2020, <https://legislature.maine.gov/doc/3815>

ⁱⁱ Chukwudi Onwuachi-Saunders, *Reproductive Rights, Reproductive Justice: Redefining Challenges to Create Optimal Health for All Women*, *Journal of Healthcare, Science and the Humanities*, Summer 2019, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9930478>