

Testimony in Support of 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 Judiciary Committee, my name is Cathleen Miller and I live in Scarborough.

I support LD 785 because it eliminates the economic barriers to the thriving of the Wabanaki Nations. This act would allow the Wabanaki Nations to benefit from the laws that apply to the other 570 federally recognized tribes. Compared to other federally recognized tribes, the Wabanaki, have not had access to the self-determination policies that allowed other tribes to see strong economic growth. Wabanaki incomes grew only 9% compared to tribes outside of Maine, whose income grew 61%. The Wabanaki deserve to have barriers to their success removed from our laws.

Since the Land Claims Settlement Act, the Wabanaki Nations have suffered higher than average childhood poverty, with between 40-77 percent of children living in poverty, compared to 15 percent of the rest of Maine's children. We must do better by our future generations. Modernizing the Settlement Act would create jobs and revenue that would benefit all Maine residents. It is time to do better.

This matters to me because I am lucky enough to have friends and colleagues in the Wabanaki Nations who have helped me to understand the massive inequities that they live with every day. I believe firmly that we all have the right to self-determination and that we all deserve to have the same opportunities available. Today, we have an opportunity to continue to strengthen the state-tribal government relationship and to stand with the Wabanaki in their sovereignty.

Thank you for considering my testimony, and thank you for your service to Maine.

Cathleen Miller
Scarborough
LD 785

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