

To: Committee of Judiciary

From: Lila Ouellette

Date: Thursday, February 19th, 2026

Re: 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 honorable members of the Committee of Judiciary. My name is Lila Ouellette, I am a resident of Orono, Maine, and I am a student at Orono High School. I am speaking today 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.

Growing up in Maine, Wabanaki studies is an imperative, yet scarce part of many Maine school's curriculum. Learning about the people who were first on the land we have the privilege of calling home is important, and powerful. Though it is inarguable that schools do not do enough teaching about Wabanaki studies, I am respectful of your time and understand the premises of this bill, LD 785, do not align with the lack of Wabanaki studies in schools. I bring this point up, however, as an anecdote to describe why this bill means so much to me.

In schools we learn of Wabanaki culture and the traditions so important to them. Teachers do this, partly because they are required to, but also because they hope that learning of Wabanaki culture will help future generations fight for the very rights of the people that were here before us. We learn that for thousands of years, the Wabanaki people have been denied the rights to their land, traditions, culture, and the sovereignty 574 other tribes in America already have. As you likely already know, the State of Maine is the only state in America that has a state law in place to override federal tribal laws. While this fact in itself is frustrating and unfair, we have the opportunity now to make what's wrong, right. Granting the Wabanaki people their sovereignty will not make up for the hundreds of years that the Maine State Government

has denied the Wabanaki people their tribal rights, but it is a step in the right direction. It proves that the State of Maine cares about the people that were living and thriving here, before there was even a government to dictate whether or not those people could.

For all the above reasons, I urge you to vote ought to pass on LD 785.

Thank you for your time.

Lila Ouellette