

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 Sage Phillips and I am a proud citizen of the Penobscot Nation. I am also co-leading the Wabanaki Policy Youth Initiative, a group of Wabanaki and non-Wabanaki youth who are passionate about advocacy, policy, and tribal-state relations. I am here with many of them to testify 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.

When I was a young child, I learned at an early age that my grandfather and elder Butch Phillips, now ancestor, was on the 1980 Land Claims Negotiating Committee as a representative of the Penobscot Nation. Throughout our conversations he would share stories about his time on the committee, what the negotiations were like, and what the intended outcomes were for the Passamaquoddy Tribe and Penobscot Nation. Every time we spoke of the Settlement Act he was very clear to underline that from the start, this was said to be a “living document.” An agreement that the Settlement Act would be amended over time and change with the needs of our people throughout the years to come. I stand before you today, now 45 years later, urging you to support equality and fairness for our people that was promised to tribal negotiators and citizens.

Our people are excluded from the other 570 federally recognized tribes who have inherent self-governance and sovereignty. It is clear that per the 22 consensus recommendations put forward by the Task Force, the Wabanaki Nations deserve to make their own decisions that are not supervised under the state’s control.

Our young Wabanaki people deserve to live in a world where their sovereignty is not questioned and their rights to self-governance do not waiver. Even as youth we understand that we must use our voices to take action that will benefit the future generations to follow in our footsteps, just as our ancestors have done. We ask that you respectfully join us by supporting LD 785.

Thank you for your time and I’m happy to answer any questions.

Sage Phillips
Wabanaki Policy Youth Initiative
LD 785

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