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February 17, 2025

Judiciary Committee  
230 State Rd.  
Augusta, ME 04333

**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**

Dear Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and other distinguished members of the Committee,

My name is Jacob Roche, and I live in Berwick, Maine. I am the Northeast Campaign Manager for the Climate and Energy Program with the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS). UCS puts rigorous, independent science into action, developing solutions and advocating for a healthy, safe, and just future. UCS has half a million supporters nationally, and over 2,500 active members in Maine. I am providing testimony on behalf of UCS in support of LD 785.

Tribal communities across Maine are disproportionately affected by problems such as climate change, environmental pollution, and loss of traditional lands. Because science has too often ignored or exacerbated racial inequities, it must now be used to right those wrongs. UCS supports the Wabanaki Alliance and calls for social and environmental justice to ensure that government policies are not only based on the best available science, but also designed to benefit all people.

The Maine State Legislature should support environmental justice by recognizing tribal sovereignty and allowing the Indigenous tribes in Maine to continue their thoughtful and expert stewardship of their lands and communities. LD 785 protects and expands

Wabanaki rights and brings them in line with those of the other 570 federally recognized tribes in the United States.

This bill would restore the tribes' inherent right to self-governance, leading to better social, economic, and environmental conditions for the Wabanaki Nations. Research shows that Wabanaki sovereignty would result in improved healthcare and education for tribal members, better environmental protections in the region, and an economic boom for the whole state.

Year after year, the Wabanaki Nations have been advocating for their sovereignty, and support is growing across the state. During the last legislative session, more than 1,600 Mainers testified in support of tribal sovereignty, including over 100 UCS supporters. Nearly 100 UCS supporters have also expressed support during this comment period.

Deeply rooted in the knowledge of their lands and their people, the Wabanaki tribes need sovereignty and the right to self-determination restored to confront the systemic and cultural racism that has been perpetrated through Maine law as well as in the name of science.

For 40 years, Maine has moved in the opposite direction from that of federal support for Indigenous self-determination. The need for sovereignty for the tribes in Maine is immediate and necessary. Because science has too often ignored or exacerbated racial inequities, it must now be used to right those wrongs. For these reasons, I urge this committee to vote "ought to pass" on LD 785.

Sincerely,

Jacob Roche  
Berwick, Maine  
Northeast Campaign Manager  
Climate and Energy Program  
Union of Concerned Scientists