

Johnny Sanchez
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LD 785

Hello, my name is Johnny Sanchez. I urge you and your fellow lawmakers to pass LD 785.

This bill is truly about fairness and equity for Wabanaki people. The rights of indigenous nations to self-govern as sovereign bodies influences their access to many absolute necessities. Despite Wabanaki Nations never having ceded the rights guaranteed to them as federally recognized tribes, the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act of 1980 and the state law that accompanied it, the Maine Implementing Act, have resulted in Maine tribes being unable to benefit from more than 150 federal laws passed since 1980. These federal laws have provisions that provide opportunities for self-determination in the form of economic development, increased access to healthcare, response to natural disasters, expanded environmental protections, increased job creation, and protection against the epidemic of violence against native women.

Moreover, there is a significant body of literature describing the extent to which Wabanaki Nations have not been able to prosper as other tribal citizens around the country have, due to the Settlement Act's restrictions. Outside of Maine, tribal citizens have seen their incomes grow over 60% since 1989 while Wabanaki citizens' incomes have only increased 9% (with Maine's overall income increase over the same period being 25%). These restrictions have also resulted in slower growth in health, educational, and economic outcomes. A recent Harvard study has shown that if Wabanaki Nations are able to prosper, there would be broad benefits for Maine as a whole as well.

I hope that you support this bill and remain committed throughout this bill's legislative process.

Thank you.