

Written Testimony for LD 395 and LD 785

February 18, 2026

To: The Committee of Judiciary

Re: Public Hearing on LD 395 and LD 785

My name is Beth Schultz and I am member of First Parish Unitarian Universalist in Portland. I am submitting testimony in support of LD 395 – an Act to Restore Access to Federal Laws Beneficial to the Wabanaki Nations, and LD 785 – An Act to Enact Recommendations on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act.

As a member and co-chair of the Wabanaki Ally Team at First Parish Unitarian Universalist in Portland, I believe in restorative justice for our Wabanaki friends and neighbors. We have studied, researched, and sought to understand the 1980 Settlement Acts, and have concluded that they are unfair and pose economic and cultural harm to the Wabanaki Nations. Not only are the Wabanaki denied parity with other federal tribes, but the acts undermine sovereignty and reinforce oppressive stereotypes and bias. A study by Harvard in 2023 concluded that achieving this parity would lead to significant job creation and greater economic development opportunities for the Wabanaki Nations and for their rural neighbors in Maine.

LD 395 will amend the 1980 Maine Indian Settlement Claims Act and the Aroostook Band of Micmacs Settlement Act so the Wabanaki Nations can benefit from existing and future federal laws that apply to the more than 570 other federally recognized tribes. The bill excludes federal tribal gaming laws, so the Wabanaki Nations would be subject to state gaming laws. In addition, LD 395 extends rights to the Mi'kmaq Nation, which did not participate in the original Settlement Acts.

LD 785 will make substantial changes to the Settlement Claims Implementing Act by addressing the problems with the law that prevents the Wabanaki Nations from exercising their inherent right to self-govern. There were 22 consensus recommendations from the 2020 bipartisan task force that have not been implemented; LD 785 would do that. Again, these recommended changes in tribal court jurisdiction; hunting, fishing, and natural resource regulation on tribal land; taxation authority; and trust land acquisition would provide parity with the other 570 federally recognized tribes.

Both LD 395 and LD 785 are sponsored by Sen. Rachel Talbot Ross and co-sponsored by a bipartisan group of legislators, including House Speaker Ryan Fecteau, House Minority Leader Billy Bob Faulkingham, and Senate President Mattie Daughtry.

Passing these two bills is long overdue. Please support these bills and join me and others in endorsing and affirming restorative justice for our Wabanaki friends and neighbors. Thank you for your consideration and dedicated service to the state of Maine.

Beth Schultz
Westbrook, Maine