

To: Sen. Carney, Rep. Kuhn, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

From: Aidan Sites, Leeds, 04263

Re: Support for LD 395, An Act to Restore Access to Federal Laws Beneficial to the Wabanaki Nations

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Aidan Sites and I live in Leeds. I am writing to you today testify in support of LD 395.

This bill aims to take necessary and longoverdue steps forward in removing future the harms done by the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act of 1980. We cannot change the past, all we can do is change the present and build a brighter future, for all.

LD 395 puts the Wabanaki Nations on equal footing with all other federally recognized tribes. Currently, the Wabanaki Nations are the only federally recognized tribes within the borders of the entire United States that must be explicitly written into each federal law to benefit from it. LD 395 would modernize the 1980 Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act (MICSA) and the Aroostook Band of Micmacs Settlement Act so that the Wabanaki Nations and their tribal members can benefit from most existing and future federal laws that apply to the other 570 federally recognized tribes. The legislation also extends to the Mi'kmaq Nation – which did not participate in MICSA – the same rights granted to the Penobscot Nation, Passamaquoddy Tribe, and Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians.

The exclusion requirement has blocked Wabanaki nations from at least [151 federal laws](#) over the past 40 years. Examples include:

- **The Stafford Act**, which provides emergency funds for natural disasters and public health crises. Wabanaki Nations have been denied direct access to these funds, including resources to address the opioid epidemic.
- **Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)**, which permits tribes to arrest and prosecute non-tribal individuals who commit certain domestic violence crimes in tribal communities. Implementation was blocked in Maine until a new state law was passed after lengthy negotiations.

- **Indian Health Care Improvement Act (IHCIA).** Permanently authorized in 2010, the IHCIA helps tribal governments recruit licensed medical professionals to work in tribal health centers – addressing the challenges tribes face recruiting health care workers in rural and isolated communities. Maine has sought to prevent Wabanaki Nations from using this recruitment authority.
- **Environmental Protection Laws.** The Clean Water Act and Clean Air Act authorize tribes to assume primary regulatory authority for federal environmental programs on their lands. Despite being environmental stewards in Maine for generations, Wabanaki Nations have been blocked from accessing these laws through court battles, hampering their efforts to protect water quality, ensure clean drinking water, and to restore wildlife and marine habitats.

Modernizing the 1980 settlement is an economic win-win for both Wabanaki tribal citizens and non-tribal Maine citizens alike. [Harvard researchers project](#) that tribal self-government would add \$330 million annually to Maine's GDP, create 2,700+ jobs (more than half filled by non-tribal rural Mainers), and generate \$39 million yearly in state and local tax revenue. When the Wabanaki thrive, rural Maine thrives.

Last – but most certainly not least – Wabanaki peoples are some of the brightest and biggest protectors of our state's rich and scenic biodiversity. I am a biologist, so I have seen firsthand the power ancestral wisdom can hold in trying to understand and ultimately protect the ecosystems that all of humanity needs to survive. 80% of biodiversity around the world is stewarded by local indigenous peoples, whereas indigenous peoples make up only about 2% of the global population. When we protect and cultivate true community with local indigenous peoples – who, for those of us in what is now called Maine, are the Wabanaki peoples – we also protect the ecosystems and nonhuman life that also call this place home.

This bill is strikingly similar to one that many of you have already seen, and already supported. The legislation LD 395 is co-sponsored by Democratic, Republican, and Independent legislators,

including leadership in both caucuses in both chambers. And the bill is similar to legislation that passed the Maine House and Senate in 2023 with [broad bipartisan support](#). This version of the bill excludes federal tribal gaming laws, stipulating that the Wabanaki Nations would be subject to state gaming laws.

Non-tribal Mainers are overwhelmingly in support of Wabanaki sovereignty. More than 1,600 Mainers testified in record numbers supporting tribal sovereignty legislation based on the [consensus recommendations](#) of a bipartisan legislative task force. Over 250 businesses and organizations have joined the [Wabanaki Alliance Tribal Coalition](#) — including the newly formed “[Businesses for Wabanaki Sovereignty](#)”. I am writing to you today as a Mainer, asking you to stand with the thousands of Mainers, as we work to make up for some of the incredible harms done by the MICSA of 1980. It is time to stand on the right side of history.

Stand with Mainers, stand with your constituents, stand with the future of this beautiful place we are lucky to call home..... Stand with the Wabanaki. Support LD 785.

Thank you for reading, for your time, and for your commitment to doing what is best for *all* the people of Maine.

Aidan Sites
Leeds
LD 395

To: Sen. Carney, Rep. Kuhn, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on
Judiciary

From: Aidan Sites, Leeds, 04263

Re: Support for LD 395, An Act to Restore Access to Federal Laws Beneficial to the
Wabanaki Nations

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and distinguished members of the Judiciary
Committee, my name is Aidan Sites and I live in Leeds. I am writing to you today
testify in support of LD 395.

This bill aims to take necessary and long overdue steps forward in removing future
the harms done by the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act of 1980. We cannot
change the past, all we can do is change the present and build a brighter future, for all.
LD 395 puts the Wabanaki Nations on equal footing with all other federally
recognized tribes.

Currently, the Wabanaki Nations are the only federally recognized tribes within the
borders of the entire United States that must be explicitly written into each federal law
to benefit from it. LD 395 would modernize the 1980 Maine Indian Claims Settlement
Act (MICSA) and the Aroostook Band of Micmacs Settlement Act so that the
Wabanaki Nations and their tribal members can benefit from most existing and future
federal laws that apply to the other 570 federally recognized tribes. The legislation
also extends to the Mi'kmaq Nation – which did not participate in MICSA – the same
rights granted to the Penobscot Nation, Passamaquoddy Tribe, and Houlton Band of
Maliseet Indians.

The exclusion requirement has blocked Wabanaki nations from at least 151 federal
laws over the past 40 years. Examples include:

1. The Stafford Act, which provides emergency funds for natural disasters and public
health crises. Wabanaki Nations have been denied direct access to these funds,
including resources to address the opioid epidemic.
2. Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), which permits tribes to arrest and
prosecute non-tribal individuals who commit certain domestic violence crimes in
tribal communities. Implementation was blocked in Maine until a new state law was
passed after lengthy negotiations.
3. Indian Health Care Improvement Act (IHCIA). Permanently authorized in 2010,
the IHCIA helps tribal governments recruit licensed medical professionals to work in
tribal health centers – addressing the challenges tribes face recruiting health care
workers in rural and isolated communities. Maine has sought to prevent Wabanaki
Nations from using this recruitment authority.
4. Environmental Protection Laws. The Clean Water Act and Clean Air Act authorize
tribes to assume primary regulatory authority for federal environmental programs on
their lands. Despite being environmental stewards in Maine for generations,
Wabanaki Nations have been blocked from accessing these laws through court battles,
hampering their efforts to protect water quality, ensure clean drinking water, and to
restore wildlife and marine habitats.

Modernizing the 1980 settlement is an economic win-win for both Wabanaki tribal
citizens and non-tribal Maine citizens alike. Harvard researchers project that tribal
self-government would add \$330 million annually to Maine's GDP, create 2,700+
jobs (more than half filled by non-tribal rural Mainers), and generate \$39 million
yearly in state and local tax revenue. When the Wabanaki thrive, rural Maine thrives.

Last – but most certainly not least – Wabanaki peoples are some of the brightest and
biggest protectors of our state's rich and scenic biodiversity. I am a biologist, so I
have seen firsthand the power ancestral wisdom can hold in trying to understand and
ultimately protect the ecosystems that all of humanity needs to survive. 80% of
biodiversity around the world is stewarded by local indigenous peoples, whereas
indigenous peoples make up only about 2% of the global population. When we

protect and cultivate true community with local indigenous peoples – who, for those of us in what is now called Maine, are the Wabanaki peoples – we also protect the ecosystems and nonhuman life that also call this place home.

This bill is strikingly similar to one that many of you have already seen, and already supported. The legislation LD 395 is co-sponsored by Democratic, Republican, and Independent legislators, including leadership in both caucuses in both chambers. And the bill is similar to legislation that passed the Maine House and Senate in 2023 with broad bipartisan support. This version of the bill excludes federal tribal gaming laws, stipulating that the Wabanaki Nations would be subject to state gaming laws.

Non-tribal Mainers are overwhelmingly in support of Wabanaki sovereignty. More than 1,600 Mainers testified in record numbers supporting tribal sovereignty legislation based on the consensus recommendations of a bipartisan legislative task force. Over 250 businesses and organizations have joined the Wabanaki Alliance Tribal Coalition — including the newly formed “Businesses for Wabanaki Sovereignty”. I am writing to you today as a Mainer, asking you to stand with the thousands of Mainers, as we work to make up for some of the incredible harms done by the MICSA of 1980. It is time to stand on the right side of history.

Stand with Mainers, stand with your constituents, stand with the future of this beautiful place we are lucky to call home..... Stand with the Wabanaki. Support LD 785.

Thank you for reading, for your time, and for your commitment to doing what is best for all the people of Maine.