



COASTAL MOUNTAINS
LAND TRUST

February 17, 2026

Dear Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Ian Stewart, Executive Director of Coastal Mountains Land Trust. I am writing on behalf of Coastal Mountains Land Trust in support of LD 395 and LD 785.

Coastal Mountains Land Trust is a nonprofit organization, founded in 1986, that works to permanently conserve land and connect people with nature in the Western Penobscot Bay region. For 40 years, we have been working to conserve natural areas in the communities we serve that are critical to our collective sense of place and well-being. We currently steward over 13,000 acres of land for the long-term benefit of the communities in which we work.

In recent years, Coastal Mountains Land Trust has placed an increased focus on connecting *all* members of the communities we serve with the land, and to welcome more voices into the process of conserving and stewarding land. More specifically, our Board of Directors, staff and supporters have invested significant time in learning more about this region's indigenous communities and their relationship with the land. Today, it is our belief that Wabanaki people have too often been left out of decision-making processes about the lands and waters in their traditional territory.

At a time when climate change and environmental degradation are rapidly accelerating, we believe that it is crucial to be open to all solutions that will help conserve natural ecosystems, including the active involvement of Wabanaki people in the management of natural lands. Globally, there is strong evidence that Indigenous peoples are critical to safeguarding biodiversity and protecting land for future generations. We believe that increased stewardship and management of natural lands in Maine by Wabanaki people will showcase important ideas from indigenous knowledge and lead to better land stewardship more broadly.

It is for this reason that Coastal Mountains Land Trust is in support of LD 395 and LD 785 which seek to grant all four Wabanaki tribes federal recognition, and to recognize their rights to self-determination and sovereignty. We believe that if the Wabanaki regain their right to self-determination and ability to renew their historic relationship with the land, all of Maine's lands and waters, as well as future generations of all Mainers, will benefit.

Thank you for your consideration and support of LD 395 and LD 785.

Sincerely,

Ian Stewart, Executive Director