

Richard Stuart
Wabanaki Alliance
LD 395

To: Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

From: Rich Stuart, 38 Knox Street, Thomaston, Maine 04861, a member of the Wabanaki Alliance

Re: In support of LD 395, An Act to Advance Self-Determination for The Wabanaki Nations

I support this LD 395 for many reasons. Some of these reasons are the following: Under current Law the Wabanaki Nations are unable to participate in most existing and future federal laws that apply to the more than 570 other federally recognized tribes. Under the Settlement Acts, when Congress passes federal legislation, Wabanaki tribes in Maine must be explicitly written into the legislation. The Wabanaki Nations are the only federally recognized tribes to be treated in this way. LD 395 would modernize the Settlement Acts, ensuring tribes in Maine are not excluded when Congress passes federal legislation for tribes nationwide, as they have been at 151 times over 40 years.

On a personal note I also support the passage of this bill for a number of reasons. I was brought up in Brunswick, and graduated from Brunswick High School and Bowdoin College in the 1960's. I took Maine History, which did not mention the plight of Maine Indigenous citizens although racism, poverty and general depravity were the conditions under which my indigenous neighbors had been living for centuries. Throughout a major portion of my adult years living in Maine I also continued to be oblivious to the continuation of these conditions under which Wabanaki folks have suffered greatly economically, socially, and culturally from this systemic racism and discrimination. Further, at the time Governor Longley and other Legislators were fighting against Wabanaki sovereignty in the Settlement agreement, I was unaware of their unfairness, and underlying discrimination involved in their objections to the Wabanaki desires for sovereignty. There is also the legal question that the final version of the signed Settlement Act contradicts Federal Indian Law, which treats Indigenous Nations as Nations within a Nation, whereas the Settlement Act treats the Wabanaki Nations as Municipalities within the State. These are some of the reasons why I passionately support the Wabanaki Nations' rights for Sovereignty.

In summary, these are some of the reasons why I passionately support the Wabanaki Nations' rights for Sovereignty. I firmly believe that the implementation of LD 395 will provide tremendous benefits to the Wabanaki Nations and Maine as a whole. The time is now for these wrongs to be righted. The passage of this bill will provide a modicum of reparations for our Wabanaki neighbors, which they rightfully deserve.

Sincerely
Rich Stuart
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