

Richard Stuart  
Wabanaki Alliance  
LD 785

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

Re: In support of LD 785, An Act to Advance Self-Determination for The Wabanaki Nations

I support LD 785 for many reasons: The legislation would make substantial changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act to address problems with the law that prevent the Wabanaki Nations in Maine from exercising their inherent right to self govern as all other federally recognized tribes in the United States are able to do under Federal Indian Law. Further, the bill would implement many of the 22 consensus recommendation reached by a bipartisan task force in 2020, tasked to review the law's effectiveness. The recommendations cover tribal court jurisdiction; hunting, fishing and natural resource regulation on tribal land; taxation authority; and trust land acquisition. The changes would bring the rights and authority of all four Wabanaki Nations (Passamaquoddy Tribe, Penobscot Nation, Mi'kmaq Nation, and Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians) in line with the other 570 federally recognized tribes in the United States.

A few of the many other reasons for my support of this bill are as follows: 1. 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. 2. Children are bearing the brunt of the Settlement Act's failures. Childhood poverty in Wabanaki communities ranges from 40% to 77%, compared to Maine's overall rate of 15%. Modernizing the Settlement Act is an economic win-win. 3. Mainers overwhelmingly support Wabanaki self-determination. 4. 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.

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 bigotry. 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. Further, I believe that the Settlement Act is in violation of Federal Indian Law, which is based on the principle that Indigenous Nations are Nations within a Nation. However, the Settlement Act appears to be based on Municipalities within the State, which is in contradiction to Federal Indian Law.

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 785 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  
Richard Stuart