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LD 395

Sen. Carney, Rep. Kuhn and members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Colin Vettier and I live in Portland. I am writing to testify in support of LD 395.

Recognizing the inherent rights of the Wabanaki Nations to self-govern is a matter of fairness and equity for Wabanaki communities and is essential for restoring the rights and abilities of the Tribes in Maine to access and steward land, regulate natural resources and land use on Tribal lands, and create greater economic opportunities for the Wabanaki Nations as well as Maine's surrounding rural communities.

-- 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 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 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.

-- Modernizing the Settlement Acts is an economic win-win.

Amending the two acts would benefit not only the Wabanaki Nations, but also rural Maine, according to a 2022 analysis by the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development. Removing the jurisdictional barriers would help the Wabanaki Nations take advantage of federal self-determination policies, programs, and funding that elsewhere in Indian Country have led to the creation of thousands of jobs and hundreds of millions of dollars in goods and services produced by Native businesses.

Thank you for reading my testimony in support of LD 395.