

To: Committee on Judiciary

From: Emmy Wahlström, Bar Harbor

Date: Feb 18th 2026

RE: Testimony in support of LD 395, “An Act to Restore Access to Federal Laws Beneficial to the Wabanaki Nations”.

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

My name is Emmy Wahlström, and I live in Bar Harbor. I come from Sweden, and I have been fortunate to call Maine home for the last four years as an international college student. I am testifying in support of LD 395, “An Act to Restore Access to Federal Laws Beneficial to the Wabanaki Nations,” because I believe that:

**The Wabanaki Nations in the State of Maine have the right to access the benefits of federal statutes and regulations intended for federally recognized tribes.** Currently, federal Indian law that does not explicitly refer to the tribes in Maine is blocked within the state. I see this as directly contradictory to the federal government’s trust responsibility to act in the best interest of tribal nations. Surely, the State of Maine also wants the best for *all* its people.

**This bill would benefit all of Maine.** Since the Settlement Acts of 1980, more than 150 federal laws meant to benefit the tribes in Maine have been blocked! A shocking number, especially considering that economically deprived places like Aroostook, Penobscot, and Washington counties as a whole would enjoy the benefits of new businesses and more job opportunities in the area, which could be made possible through the federal benefits granted through this bill. Instead of lagging behind in Maine’s economic development, this bill would support the tribes’ ability to contribute to the State’s economy.

**The Wabanaki Nations have inherent sovereignty and cannot be treated simply as any other municipality in the state.** Yes, the tribes and their trust lands are within the State of Maine, however, the Constitution recognizes their sovereignty in the Commerce Clause and the tribes have certain rights and needs. When signing onto the Settlement Acts of 1980, I cannot imagine that the tribes would knowingly have excluded themselves from federal programs and funding that would have supported them in exercising their right to self-governance and ensuring the well-being of their citizens.

**This bill is not an attempt to undermine Maine State Law, but rather, a long overdue decision to grant the Wabanaki Nations access to the funding and programs they are entitled to.**

For these reasons, (out of many more), I respectfully encourage you to support LD 395.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration of my testimony.

Best regards,

Emmy Wahlström,

Bar Harbor