

Testimony of the Council on Indigenous Relations
of the Episcopal Diocese of Maine
In Support of LD 395, An Act to Restore Federal Laws
Beneficial to the Wabanaki Nations

Submitted for the Public Hearing Before the Maine Legislature's
Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary, January 2026

Sen. Carney, Rep. Kuhn, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary, my name is Richard Farnsworth, and I serve on the Legislative Committee of the Council on Indigenous Relations of the Episcopal Diocese of Maine. Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of LD 395 An Act to Restore Federal Laws Beneficial to the Wabanaki Nations.

The Episcopal Committee on Indian Relations was formed by resolution of the Diocesan Convention in 1991. For over 30 years, we have lived into our mission “to deepen our relationship with the Wabanaki of Maine, to stand with the tribes in the pursuit of justice, to affirm their inherent sovereignty, and to support the preservation of Native languages and culture.”

On October 22, 2022, the 203rd annual convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Maine reaffirmed its commitment to the sovereignty of the Wabanaki nations located within the State of Maine by passing overwhelmingly Resolution #1. Resolution #1

(1) “urges the 131st Maine Legislature to pass a bill or bills in a form consistent with the goal of tribal sovereignty and the recommendations of the Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act, and urges the Governor to sign this bill(s) when they reach their desk;” (2) “urges the members of the Maine Congressional delegation to sponsor, the U.S. Congress to pass, and the President to sign legislation ensuring that the tribes located in Maine are covered by federal Indian legislation without the necessity to state that they are covered in each law that is enacted,” and (3) “continues to support the Mi’kmaq Nation as they pursue the process they deem most appropriate to achieve redress of the Aroostook Band of Micmacs Settlement.”

At the time of the passage of this Diocesan resolution, there was legislation pending in Congress, H.R. 6707 An Act to Advance Equality for Wabanaki Nations, which passed in the U.S. House of Representatives. In the rush to final adjournment of Congress, H.R. 6707 did not pass in the U.S. Senate. One of the arguments used against passage of H.R. 6707 was that it did not have the support of the State of Maine. Passage of LD 395 would demonstrate beyond reasonable doubt that amending the Settlement Acts of 1980 does, indeed, have the support of the State of Maine!

LD 395 seeks to achieve the same primary goal as H.R. 6707, to remove state barriers to the application of federal laws benefiting Indigenous nations to the Wabanaki nations of Maine.

As of 2019, a report by Suffolk University identified 151 federal laws benefiting Indigenous nations that the Wabanaki Nations did not have access to. As demonstrated by a report by Harvard University in 2022, the inability to access these laws stunted the economic development of the Wabanaki nations, and also of the surrounding rural areas of Maine.

Diocesan Resolution #1 also includes support for the Mi'kmaq nation in their efforts to amend their separate Settlement Act. LD 395 also includes provisions to address the terms of this subsequent Settlement Act.

The Council on Indigenous Relations has voted unanimously to support LD 395, to accomplish the goals set forth in 2022 Diocesan Convention Resolution #1. We urge you to vote "Ought to Pass" on LD 395, and thank you for your consideration of our testimony.

Respectfully submitted.

Richard Farnsworth,

on behalf of the Council on Indigenous Relations
Episcopal Diocese of Maine

CC: Senator Rachel Talbot Ross, Co-sponsor
Rep. Billy Bob Faulkingham, Co-Sponsor
Susan Pinette, Clerk
Jane Stocco, OPLA
Shirley Hager, MFCPP

Stephen Ward
Newcastle
LD 395

Testimony of Stephen Ward in Support of LD 395,
An Act to Restore Federal Laws Beneficial
to the Wabanaki Nations

Submitted for the Public Hearing Before the Maine Legislature's Joint Standing
Committee on Judiciary, February 19, 2026

Sen. Carney, Rep. Kuhn, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary,
my name is Stephen Ward, and I am testifying as an individual and as a resident of
Newcastle Maine. I also serve as Treasurer of the Council on Indigenous Relations of
the Episcopal Diocese of Maine, formerly the Committee on Indian Relations created
in 1991 by a resolution of the Episcopal Diocese of Maine.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of LD 395, An Act to
Restore Federal Laws Beneficial to the Wabanaki Nations. In the Fall of 2022, there
was legislation pending in Congress, H.R. 6707, An Act to Advance Equality for
Wabanaki Nations, which passed in the U.S. House of Representatives. In the rush to
final adjournment of Congress, H.R. 6707 did not pass in the U.S. Senate. One of the
arguments used against passage of H.R. 6707 was that it did not have the support of
the State of Maine.

Passage of LD 395 would demonstrate beyond reasonable doubt that thus amending
the Settlement Acts of 1980 does, indeed, have the support of the State of Maine.
LD 395 seeks to achieve the same primary goal as H.R. 6707, to remove state barriers
to the application of federal laws benefiting indigenous nations to the Wabanaki
nations of Maine.

As of 2019, a report by Suffolk University identified 151 federal laws benefiting
indigenous nations that the Wabanaki Nations did not have access to. As
demonstrated by a report by Harvard University in 2022, the inability to access these
laws stunted the economic development of the Wabanaki nations, and also of
surrounding rural areas of Maine.

I urge an "Ought to Pass" vote on LD 395.

Respectfully submitted, Stephen Ward, Newcastle