



TO: The Honorable Anne Carney
The Honorable Matt Moonen, Co-Chairs
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

DATE: May 31st, 2023

RE: LD 2004, An Act to Restore Access to Federal Laws Beneficial to the Wabanaki Nations

Good morning Senator Carney and Representative Moonen,

My name is Lane Sturtevant. I'm a resident of Warren. I am submitting testimony on behalf of the League of Women Voters of Maine in support of LD 2004, An Act to Restore Access to Federal Laws Beneficial to the Wabanaki Nations.

The League of Women Voters of Maine is a nonpartisan political organization that has been working for over 100 years to encourage informed and active participation in government, to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and to influence public policy through education and advocacy. We never support or oppose any political party or candidate.

Many of the best features of democracy in the United States were influenced by principles of equality, freedom, and respect that were common in tribal governments — much more common than in European governments at the time. These examples inspired our founders as they envisioned individual liberty in our new nation. By recognizing the right of the Wabanaki peoples to govern themselves, we reaffirm our belief in government “of the people, by the people and for the people,” the most foundational principle of our democracy.

LD 2004 is a step toward recognizing the Wabanaki peoples' right to self-govern. It would allow Wabanaki peoples to benefit from future federal legislation for tribes. Unlike every other federally recognized tribe in the United States, Wabanaki tribes are currently excluded from such legislation unless they are explicitly written into it. LD 2004 would rectify this unequal treatment by changing a provision of the 1980 Settlement Act.

The inequalities that resulted in the exclusion of the Wabanaki tribes from approximately 151 federal beneficial laws since the 1980s continue to prevent the Wabanaki peoples from accessing full self-government – in other words, full democracy. As champions of democracy, the League of Women Voters of Maine wholeheartedly supports the step that LD 2004 takes toward restoring this right of self-government to the Wabanaki peoples.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. We hope you will support LD 2004.