

Testimony of the Wabanaki Alliance in support of
LD 1115 An Act Regarding Economic Development Funds for Federally Recognized Indian
Tribes

Presented for the Public Hearing Before the Maine Legislature's Committee on Innovation,
Development, Economic Advancement and Business
March 28, 2023

Sen. Curry, Rep. Roberts, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business; my name is John Dieffenbacher-Krall. I reside in Old Town, and I am the Executive Director of the [Wabanaki Alliance](#). The group was founded in June 2020 by the five federally recognized nations in what we today call the State of Maine, the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians, Mi'kmaq Nation, Passamaquoddy Tribe at Motahkmikuk, Passamaquoddy Tribe at Sipayik, and Penobscot Nation. The Wabanaki Alliance was created to educate the people of Maine about the need for securing the sovereignty of Wabanaki Nations.

The Wabanaki Alliance supports LD 1115. We thank Rep. Collings for introducing this bill.

The bill would allocate 10% of the available funds in the Community Development Block Grant Program to be provided on an equitable basis to the federally recognized Indian tribes in this State. Dedicating a stable source of revenue to Wabanaki Nations for economic development would benefit them and the surrounding Maine communities. Wabanaki Nations have suffered suppressed economic development as documented in the report *Economic and Social Impacts of Restrictions on the Applicability of Federal Indian Policies to the Wabanaki Nations in Maine*.

While Indian Country has enjoyed a boom of prosperity since the onset of the modern self-determination era in federal Indian policy measured at 61%, Wabanaki Nations have only grown 9%¹. LD 1115 would correct for some of the historic suppression of Wabanaki economic development. The committee is well aware that the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians, Mi'kmaq Nation, Passamaquoddy Tribe at Motahkmikuk, and Passamaquoddy Tribe at Sipayik live in some of the poorest areas within the State of Maine. The Harvard research referenced earlier found that the constraints imposed by the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act have diminished Maine GDP by an estimated \$330 million including the loss of 2,743 jobs in regions needing more employment opportunities and the loss of \$39 million in local and state revenue.²

The Wabanaki Alliance urges the Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business to vote ought to pass on this bill.

¹ Kalt, Joseph P., Medford, Amy Besaw, Taylor, Jonathan B. (2022) Economic and Social Impacts of Restrictions on the Applicability of Federal Indian Policies to the Wabanaki Nations in Maine. Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development, https://ash.harvard.edu/sites/hwpi.harvard.edu/files/ash/files/wabanaki_report_vfin_for_dist_2022-12-09.pdf?m=1670635016, p. 16.

² Ibid, p. 40