



Dear Senator Carney, Representative Harnett, and esteemed members of the Committee on Judiciary,

My name is Izzy Ostrowski, and I'm the Social Change Advocate at Preble Street, a human services anti-poverty agency with over fifteen programs and services provided across the state. I am here today to testify in support of [LD 1626: An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act](#).

At Preble Street, we know that we cannot be doing antipoverty work if we are not also engaged in anti-racism work. Housing insecurity and homelessness exist today in part due to our country's legacy of racist housing policies. Additionally, oppressive state and federal policies regarding tribal sovereignty have played a harmful role in the extreme levels of homelessness, hunger, and poverty within, and among, Indigenous communities. Maine is not exempt from the disproportionate racial impacts of homelessness and hunger.

2020 racial demographic data from ten Preble Street programs corroborate this inequity and show that a high percentage of People of Color access Preble Street services. On average, 22% of individuals accessing Preble Street programs are Black, Indigenous, or People of Color. 38% of people who use the Preble Street Quarantine Shelter — people who are COVID positive or are awaiting the result of a COVID test and need a safe place to quarantine and heal — are Black, Indigenous or People of Color; 37% of youth staying at the Preble Street Teen Shelter are People of Color; and 25% of clients in the Preble Street Anti-Trafficking Services program are People of Color.

I am sharing these statistics because they are one example of why tribal sovereignty is so vitally important. Oppressive state and federal regulation of Native tribes, as well as a lack of sovereignty for those tribes, has resulted in worse health and economic outcomes for Indigenous communities in Maine. Exercising control over Indigenous people and land while simultaneously not investing in equitable resources for those communities is the sordid history of Maine's systemic oppression of tribal communities. The 22 consensus recommendations released in January of 2020 by the Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act would increase the ability for tribes to determine their communities' futures.

According to the Wabanaki Alliance, since the 1980 Settlement Act, 151 federal laws have been passed to benefit the over 500 federally recognized tribes across the country. In contrast, the State of Maine has still not recognized the sovereignty of the Wabanaki Tribes, including the Penobscot Nation, Passamaquoddy Tribe, Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians, and Aroostook Band of Micmacs. Federal legislation ensures tribes' inherent rights to govern themselves. But under state law, the tribes of Maine are excluded from that as well as other rights and protections guaranteed by Federal Indian Law.

Maine has a longstanding history of inflicting trauma upon Indigenous communities. This does not have to be the future, and this bill would be a step toward prioritizing a future of equity, sovereignty, and healing for Maine's Indigenous tribes. For this reason, Preble Street urgently asks you to vote in support of LD 1626. Thank you for your time.

*Submitted February 15, 2022*