

Testimony in opposition to LD 812 and LD 813 An Act to Provide State Recognition to the Kineo St. John Tribe and An Act Regarding State Recognition of Native American Tribes

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

My name is Maulian Bryant; I am Executive Director of the Wabanaki Alliance. The Wabanaki Alliance was founded in June 2020 by the federally recognized nations in our homelands now called 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 to restore the recognition of tribal sovereignty of Wabanaki Nations.

The Wabanaki Alliance is opposed to these bills and we ask this committee to stand with the Wabanaki Nations who are federally recognized. We opposed efforts for a State recognition process in a previous Legislative session. With my testimony, I will include a letter signed by all Chiefs at the time of that attempt at state recognition. Our concerns remain the same: this attempts to bypass the federal recognition process. Wabanaki Tribes have all met the standard at the federal level and we believe this legislation could set a precedent that may lead to groups becoming tribes in ways that undermine the status of the existing federally recognized tribes.

These bills would cause further confusion and set back not just the progress we have made, but also, the great strides we have made in healing our relationship with the state government.

Many bills have been heard in this room about amending the 1980 acts and some of them have been successful. The Wabanaki Alliance is proud of the work we have done together and while we don't enjoy having to oppose these bills today, we see it as necessary to protect the advancements we have made and we look forward to the work we have left to do together.

I am happy to take any questions, thank you.