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LC002775
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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2025

SENATE RESOLUTION

SUPPORTING THE RECOGNITION OF THE POKANOKET TRIBE AS THE ANCIENT
AND ONGOING STEWARDS OF THEIR ANCESTRAL HOMELAND, AND
ACKNOWLEDGING THEIR CENTRAL ROLE IN SHAPING THE REGION'S PAST,
PRESENT, AND FUTURE

Introduced By: Senators Ujifusa, Urso, Britto, McKenney, Gu, Appollonio, Sosnowski,
Raptakis, DiPalma, and Murray
Date Introduced: May 07, 2025

Referred To: Recommended for Immediate Consideration

1 WHEREAS, The Pokanoket Tribe is the ancient and continuous steward of the lands now
2 known as Bristol, Warren, Barrington, East Providence, and parts of Providence, including Mount
3 Hope (Montaup), the seat of Pokanoket government and the home of Massasoit (Great Sachem)
4 Ousamequin; and

5 WHEREAS, The Pokanoket Tribe was the headship tribe of the Pokanoket Confederacy,
6 which included over 60 Tribes and Bands united by cultural, linguistic, and historical ties, and
7 continue to uphold traditions, protect sacred sites, and revitalize languages across Rhode Island
8 and southeastern Massachusetts; and

9 WHEREAS, The Pokanoket people developed sophisticated systems of governance,
10 diplomacy, and environmental stewardship long before European contact, values they continue to
11 uphold through formal tribal structures and spiritual practice; and

12 WHEREAS, In 1524, Italian explorer Giovanni da Verrazzano described the Pokanoket
13 peoples at Mount Hope Bay as “the goodliest people” he had seen, noting their strength, dignity,
14 and generosity; and

15 WHEREAS, In March 1621, Massasoit Ousamequin entered into a treaty with the
16 Plymouth Colony, ensuring mutual protection and peaceful coexistence that lasted for more than
17 fifty years; and

18 WHEREAS, The Pokanoket sheltered and nursed an ailing Roger Williams back to

1 health, contributing to the founding of Rhode Island in 1636; and

2 WHEREAS, Massasoit Ousamequin was laid to rest at Burr’s Hill in Warren, Rhode
3 Island, a sacred site, and in 2017, the Wampanoag Repatriation Confederation secured the return
4 of sacred items from the Smithsonian under the 1990 federal Native American Graves Protection
5 and Repatriation Act; and

6 WHEREAS, Members of the Pokanoket tribe, including Simeon Simon in 1781, served
7 in the Revolutionary War, fighting with American soldiers; and

8 WHEREAS, Throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, Pokanoket leaders like Princess
9 Red Wing (Mary E. Glasko Congdon), Frederick Weeden, and Sagamore William “Winds of
10 Thunder” Guy have advanced Indigenous rights, cultural preservation, and sovereignty, including
11 helping to secure the return of sacred lands from Brown University in 2017; and

12 WHEREAS, The Pokanoket Tribe continues to engage in educational initiatives, land
13 stewardship, and cultural celebrations across their homeland, ensuring their history remains vital
14 to Rhode Island’s identity; and

15 WHEREAS, In 2021, the Tribe marked the 400th anniversary of the 1621 treaty, and
16 dealing with centuries of challenges, including the erosion of land rights, broken treaties, and
17 unfulfilled promises—with enduring strength and resilience; and

18 WHEREAS, In November 2024, Brown University, as part of its commitment to
19 preserving the land and ensuring sustainable access for Native tribes with ties to it, transferred
20 ownership of 255 acres of its Mount Hope property in Bristol to a preservation trust established
21 by the Pokanoket Tribe; and

22 WHEREAS, This land holds significant ancestral importance for the Tribe, being the
23 home of Metacom (King Philip) and the site of his death during King Philip's War, and the
24 transfer ensures access to this historically and spiritually vital land and water; now, therefore be it

25 RESOLVED, That this Senate of the State of Rhode Island hereby supports the
26 recognition of the Pokanoket Tribe as the ancient and ongoing steward of its ancestral homeland,
27 and acknowledges its central role in shaping the region’s past, present, and future; and be it
28 further

29 RESOLVED, That this Senate hereby honors the Pokanoket Tribe’s ancestors and living
30 descendants, and commits to promoting and protecting their cultural heritage, sacred lands, and
31 rightful place in Rhode Island history; and be it further

32 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and hereby is authorized and directed to
33 transmit duly certified copies of this resolution to the Honorable Senator Jack Reed, the
34 Honorable Senator Sheldon Whitehouse, the Honorable Congressman Seth Magaziner, the

- 1 Honorable Congressman Gabe Amo, the Honorable Governor Dan McKee, the Honorable Lt.
- 2 Governor Sabina Matos, the Honorable Treasurer James Diossa, the Honorable Secretary of State
- 3 Gregg Amore, and Sagamore William Guy.

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