

# Maine Climate Action **NOW!**

To: Maine Legislature Committee on Judiciary

From: Amy Eshoo, Maine Climate Action Now

Date: February 23, 2024

Re: LD 2007: *An Act to Advance Self-determination for Wabanaki Nations* OUGHT TO PASS

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and honorable members of the Committee on Judiciary; Tribal Leaders and Members, my name is Amy Eshoo. I am a resident of unceded Wabanaki land called North Yarmouth and Director of Maine Climate Action Now, a statewide coalition of eighteen grassroots organizations which support transformative action in response to the climate crisis.

Our work as a coalition is to center equity and justice in climate action. We strive to honor and amplify the voices of those historically excluded from political decision-making power, and call for a just and equitable transition to a secure climate future. We stand in solidarity with the Penobscot Nation, the Passamaquoddy Tribe, the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians and the Mi'kmaq Nation.

The tribes in the land we now call Maine deserve the rights, privileges, powers, duties and immunities similar to those of other federally recognized Indian tribes within the United States. We support this bill which will recognize the Wabanaki Nations' inherent rights to self-determination. These Nations' right to self-govern includes the inherent right to sustain their traditional cultural values and practices.

Tribal sovereignty is directly linked to the work we do as a climate justice coalition. To fully begin to address the climate crisis and repair the damage we have done to our shared home, we must also understand and repair the harms visited upon Indigenous communities. Mitigating climate change and repairing historical and ongoing social harms can – and must – be taken on simultaneously.

Wabanaki Nations and other Indigenous people around the world will play a crucial role in addressing the climate crisis. Across the planet, Indigenous people make up less than 5% of the global population but protect 80% of the world's biodiversity.<sup>1</sup>

Our coalition recognizes the importance of incorporating Indigenous knowledge and worldviews into climate education. In our Maine Climate Science website Portal, which outlines the effects of climate change on Maine, we have presented the information as a weaving of western science with traditional ecological knowledge of the Wabanaki Nation. We do this with the understanding that only looking at the world through one eye – the European colonial extractive mode– is to perpetuate the systems that have brought us to the brink of catastrophe in our climate. It would behoove us to open the other eye and see how Indigenous cultures, who have been stewards of this land from time immemorial, approach living in relation to this world. To work together with both eyes open, equity and restorative justice must be centered so that we can stand and work together.

Restore fairness, equity and self-determination. Give us all hope that we can move forward together as equals to protect all our futures. Please vote Ought To Pass for LD 2007. Thank you for your consideration.

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<sup>1</sup> Raygorodetsky, Gleb, "[Indigenous peoples defend Earth's biodiversity—but they're in danger](#)", *National Geographic*, May 4, 2021, Accessed February 20, 2024.