

**Testimony of John Dieffenbacher-Krall, Executive Director, Wabanaki Alliance,  
in Support of LD 2007 An Act to Advance Self-determination for Wabanaki Nations  
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary Maine Legislature, 2/26/24**

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee; my name is John Dieffenbacher-Krall. I live in Old Town, and I appear before you today in my capacity as Executive Director of the Wabanaki Alliance. The group was founded in June 2020 by the four Wabanaki Nations principally living in five communities in what we today call the State of Maine, the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians, Mi'kmaq Nation, Passamaquoddy Tribe at Motahkomikuk, Passamaquoddy Tribe at Sipayik, and Penobscot Nation. The Wabanaki Alliance was created to educate the people of Maine about the need for securing the inherent sovereignty of Wabanaki Nations.

The Wabanaki Alliance supports LD 2007. We thank Speaker Rachel Talbot Ross and the more than 100 co-sponsors for introducing this legislation.

This is the third consecutive legislative session that the Maine Legislature has considered the recommendations from the Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act. As the five Wabanaki Nation chiefs stated in an open letter issued in April 2022, "Permanent sovereignty restoration remains the legislative priority for the Wabanaki Nations, and it will continue to be our priority moving forward." The Wabanaki Nations have not deviated from that goal.

Since the Maine Legislature last considered comprehensive legislation to implement the Task Force recommendations, public support for Wabanaki self-determination has significantly grown. We saw the resounding support of Maine people for Question 6, requiring the printing of all provisions of the Maine Constitution, achieving nearly 73% of the vote. Last April the Wabanaki Alliance created the Wabanaki Alliance Tribal Coalition. In ten months, **257** organizations and businesses have joined all committed to Wabanaki inherent sovereignty. Over 2,000 people have testified in support of the Task Force recommendations during the last and current legislative session. Mainers want action on justice and equitable treatment for Wabanaki Nations.

Though the Wabanaki Alliance deeply appreciates the many people and organizations that support Wabanaki self-determination from a sense of justice, equality, and fairness, acting on the Task Force recommendations will also greatly benefit the State of Maine economically and financially. When tribal communities thrive, adjoining communities and regions thrive. Modeling done by the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development projects should the restrictions of the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act be eliminated Maine GDP would grow by \$330 million/year, the economic stimulus would create 2,743 jobs including 2,287 non-Indian jobs, increase Wabanaki Nations governmental revenue by \$68 million/year, and boost federal taxes by \$51 million/year and state and local taxes by \$39 million/year. I can't imagine any other policy change that could yield such significant benefits for such little cost. The only real cost is the State of Maine relinquishing its unjustified control of Wabanaki Nations and Wabanaki Peoples.

Let's replace state control with Wabanaki self-determination, suspicion with trust, and poverty with prosperity. Let us in 2024 finally realize the promise of the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act, not solely resolving a land claim but forging a new relationship between Wabanaki Nations and the State of Maine marked by respect for each government's right to self-determination in law and political relations.

I urge the committee to vote ought to pass for LD 2007.