

Carol Horne
Appleton
LD 2004

Members of the Judiciary Committee of the Maine State Legislature:

I am writing to you in support of LD 2004 An Act to Enact the Advancing Equality for Wabanaki Nations Act.

I consider it vastly unfair that the State of Maine treats our Wabanaki tribes to a different standard than other Maine communities and to other tribes nationwide because of the 1980 Settlement Act. I am not myself a member of a tribe in Maine, but I would hope that all citizens of our state are treated fairly, including and perhaps especially our indigenous peoples. Because of the 1980 Settlement Act, when Congress passes federal legislation for tribes nationwide the tribes in Maine must be explicitly written into the legislation unlike the other federally recognized tribes. This is an excessive burden of time and effort to the tribes, and our legislature. Suffolk University published a report in 2019 highlighting the federal beneficial Indian laws passed by Congress since the Settlement Act was implemented in 1980. They found approximately 151 federal laws have been passed that the tribes in Maine do not have access to. Many of the laws which have passed that the tribes do not have access to would not only benefit the tribes but the surrounding rural areas. With the tribes not being able to access various federal funding their self-determination and economic vitality have been stunted. Allowing access to federal beneficial laws will not only benefit the tribes but rural Maine. My understanding is that our current Governor Mills feels that we should take each piece of legislation passed regarding the Wabanaki tribes on a case by case basis. If this were to happen, it would be an immense legislative burden on our legislature and the tribes. For example, in 2013 the Violence Against Woman's Act was finally amended to include Native American women. However, the tribes in Maine were not included. Maine finally passed legislation mirroring the federal law to include the tribes in Maine in 2020.

It is my opinion that instead of considering each law, each right and each promise to the tribes separately, that instead we as a state could legislate sovereignty to our tribes to place them on equal footing with our communities and other federally recognized tribes. If specific legislation in the sovereignty bill should come into question, then the legislature could act to refine that bill after its passing. In that case, it would not take 7+ years for our tribes to access federal legislation that would benefit their communities, and save the time and effort and cost expended on considering each of these bills separately.

I thank you for your consideration on this bill,
Carol Horne, resident of Appleton, Maine