

Dugan Murphy
Portland
LD 2007

To: Sen. Carney, Rep. Moonen, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

From: Dugan Murphy, owner of Portland by the Foot historical walking tours at 61 India St #3 in Portland 04101

Re: Support for LD 2007, An Act to Advance Self-determination for Wabanaki Nations

Sen. Carney, Rep. Moonen, and members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Dugan Murphy and I am a tour operator living and working in Portland. I am writing to testify in support of LD 2007.

Everyday for the majority of the year, I lead tours for out-of-state visitors and share with them the things that make Maine unique. Many of those qualities are a source of pride. The one that surprises visitors again and again is how we are the only state failing to recognize the inherent sovereignty of the Indigenous nations within our borders. There are other ways in which Maine leads the country, but in this, we are clearly behind: Wabanaki income growth is stagnant when compared to the 570 recognized tribes in other states. This is an economic boom benefiting the rest of the country that Maine has locked out.

Most tour guests are appalled to hear this, and many have questions. They ask what is in the way. I tell them about the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act and how the state has kept it from being the living document it was meant to be, despite a majority of Mainers wanting the settlement improved.

We have another chance this year to fix many of the issues from the 1980 settlement. LD 2007 has the potential to raise the standard of living in underserved parts of the state, lower child poverty, and reduce legal expenses the tribes and taxpayers pay to litigate issues created by the unaltered 1980 legislation. Aside from the social and economic benefits to both tribal members and non-members like myself, there's an obvious reason to support LD 2007 that is nevertheless worth considering.

It is the right frigging thing to do. It is.

I want to be able to tell tourists a success story: in 2024, Maine's legislators and governor, despite two failed attempts two years in a row, finally achieved a bold improvement in state-tribal relations, aligning themselves with popular opinion and with the nationwide standard behind which Maine had lagged for so long. We can do that.

Thank you, members of the Judiciary Committee, for taking the time to read my testimony. I hope you all agree that the decision to support LD 2007 is straightforward yet imperative. Let's do the right thing.