

Testimony of Sage Phillips in support of LD 2007 An Act to Advance Self-determination  
for Wabanaki Nations

Thursday, February 22, 2024

Chairwoman Carney, Chairman Moonen, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Sage Phillips, and I am a citizen of the Penobscot Nation. I am testifying in support of LD 2007 An Act to Advance Self-determination for Wabanaki Nations.

The 1980 Maine Indian Land Claims Settlement Act promised both the Penobscot and Passamaquoddy tribes the opportunity to purchase up to 150,000 acres of land.<sup>1</sup> The land that our people have stewarded, protected, and lived in unison with throughout time immemorial. The very land that makes up the beauty of the State of Maine.

Our Wabanaki people are storytellers. Our stories bring us life. My own grandfather often tells me stories of his time as a member of the Negotiating Committee for the 1980 Maine Indian Land Claims Settlement Act. He shares the process and promises from the negotiations, however, his stories always come to a halt with the same remark: “We had a lot of pressure on us. At the time, it was what we had to do.” His story does not end there—as the State of Maine develops, so do our Wabanaki communities. The laws must change with us and we must rewrite history in order to move forward.

As a graduate student studying human rights at the University of Connecticut, I center my work in the future generations of our Penobscot and Wabanaki people. LD 2007 would give our future generations sovereignty—the self-determination that we as Wabanaki have sought from the State of Maine for many generations. Currently, we do not benefit from the federal laws that the other 570 federally recognized tribes in the country do as a result of the 1980 Land Claims, and it is time to change that.

This is not a partisan issue. It is an issue that will impact all of Maine today, and all of Maine for the generations to come. I strongly urge you to support LD 2007 An Act to Advance Self-determination for Wabanaki Nations and stand with the Wabanaki. Thank you for your consideration, it is my hope that you will join us in protecting our futures.

*Sage Phillips*  
*Penobscot Nation*

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<sup>1</sup> “LD 2007 Frequently Asked Questions.” Wabanaki Alliance, 21 Feb. 2024, [www.wabanakialliance.com/ld-2007-faq/](http://www.wabanakialliance.com/ld-2007-faq/).