

PSR Maine

Physicians for Social Responsibility Maine Chapter

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

From: Sydney R. Sewall, MD, PO BOX 229, Hallowell, ME 04347, President PSR Maine

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

As the President of Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR) Maine, I am writing to express our unwavering endorsement of LD 2007.

PSR Maine represents a robust coalition of over 1000 healthcare practitioners, professionals, and passionate advocates dedicated to advancing public health. Our mission revolves around enlightening both the public and policymakers about the most pressing threats to our collective well-being.

The stringent constraints enforced by the 1980 Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act (MICSA) have unjustly hindered the Wabanaki Nations' ability to achieve the remarkable economic progress witnessed by 570 other federally recognized tribes over the past four decades. While these tribes have flourished through full access to federal policies promoting self-determination, the Wabanaki Nations have remained sidelined. The removal of these barriers is imperative to enable the Wabanaki Nations to capitalize on federal self-determination policies, programs, and funding, which have catalyzed the creation of numerous job opportunities and the generation of hundreds of millions of dollars in goods and services by Native enterprises elsewhere in Indian Country.

Our chapter is particularly alarmed by the ramifications of childhood poverty on children's health. Recent U.S. Census data from 2019 reveals distressing figures: childhood poverty rates range from 40% at the Passamaquoddy Tribe in the Motahkomikuk community to a staggering 77% for the Mi'kmaq Nation in Aroostook County within Wabanaki communities. This stands in stark contrast to Maine's overall childhood poverty rate of 15% during the same period.

For thousands of years, the Wabanaki have upheld their role as custodians of the environment, safeguarding sustainable ecological practices well before European settlers arrived in Maine. This dedication to environmental preservation is deeply rooted in their cultural heritage and serves as a cornerstone of their identity as Wabanaki peoples, a legacy that will endure for generations to come. The profound influence of their practices on rural Maine cannot be overstated.

Given these compelling reasons, PSR Maine unequivocally lends its support to LD 2007.