

Carol Horne
Appleton
LD 2007

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

From: Carol Horne, resident of Appleton Maine.

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 Carol Horne and I live in Appleton, Maine. Please accept my testimony in support of LD 2007.

I am submitting this testimony because I stand with several thousand persons in Maine in favor of LD 2007 and in supporting these steps toward self-determination for the Wabanaki Nation in Maine. I feel strongly that this law will begin to take steps toward restitution for the embedded oppression that the US government has impressed upon the Native American Nation, and that our tribes in Maine feel acutely. I feel that it is a step toward treating the Maine tribes with fairness, and will bring to them economic and sovereign benefits equal to other Native American tribes in the United States.

The current Settlement Acts governing the Wabanaki Nation in Maine allows the Maine government to exert an unusual level of jurisdiction over tribal affairs not found in any other state of the United States. For more than 40 years, the state of Maine has used the Settlement Acts to deny Wabanaki Nations' authority to self-govern in a myriad of ways, and my understanding is that this is also in direct conflict with the foundations of US Federal Indian Law. While the restoration of self-governance has proven critically important for tribes throughout Indian Country, the Wabanaki Nations in Maine have been left behind, unable to access the full benefits of their sovereign status.

Since the time of the 1980 Settlement Acts, Congress has enacted more than 150 federal laws for the benefit of tribal nations, and the state of Maine has fought to block access to many of them, laws designed to improve life for these nations.

Compared to tribes outside of Maine, all four Wabanaki Nations lag severely in economic development, in part due to lack of access to policies, programs, and funding that build and support self-governance. According to the Harvard Report, between 1989 and 2018, income in Maine grew 25%, while income growth for Wabanaki citizens was just 9%. In 2021, the average income for Mainers was more than twice as high as Wabanaki citizens. Compared to the rest of Maine, and the Wabanaki child poverty rate is almost four times higher.

I believe that the enactment of LD 2007 will provide helpful access to many of these federal laws and will improve economic development in Maine, thus improving Maine's overall economic status. My concern is primarily for the Maine Wabanaki Nations, including children suffering in poverty, with no access to rightful benefits of establishing safe and secure housing, income and health care. I believe that steps toward sovereignty of these tribes will improve their lives and futures.

Thank you for your careful consideration of LD 2007. As a constituent and voter in Maine, I urge you to support this bill.