

Betsy Williams  
Brunswick  
LD 2007

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary,

My name is Betsy Williams and I live in Brunswick. I am writing in support of LD 2007, An Act to Advance Self-determination for Wabanaki Nations. My Unitarian Universalist faith calls me to speak up against policies that diminish human dignity and deny citizens the right of self-determination. Our current policies regarding Maine's indigenous tribes fall into this category. LD 2007 would reverse this decades old injustice.

Sixty years ago, the government of Maine forced the Wabanakis to give up their children so they would assimilate into our white culture. White ruling class Mainers at that time were guilty of forcing change on a people with the intent that they would eventually disappear as a viable political and cultural sub-group of our state. The utter failure of that inhumane effort brought untold pain to generations of individuals, families, and communities. Many Mainers today, including myself, look back on that policy with feelings of regret and shame.

The Settlement Act of 1980, although not motivated by this same intent, has nonetheless had the same shameful effect by denying the Wabanakis federal rights and benefits given to our nation's 570 other tribes. In 2012 Maine's Tribal-State Commission report found implementation of the Settlement Act of 1980 "created structural inequities that have resulted in conditions that have "risen to the level of human rights violations."

Let us not go down the path we did sixty years ago and someday look back with shame and regret again. Let us change the trajectory of our relationship with our tribal neighbors from a fear-based and controlling one, to one that is based on trust, respect, and mutual interdependence. Please, vote Ought to Pass on LD 2007 and make Mainers proud that our state legislators can do what is right for all our citizens.

Thank you.