

Emily Harger
Searsmont
LD 2007

As a resident of Searsmont, an employee of Maine Environmental Education Association, and a neighbor to Native friends and colleagues in Maine, I urge you to pass LD 2007.

I want to remind my representatives that the Wabanaki Nations are the ONLY federally recognized tribe in the United States who do not have the inherent right to self govern. This bill would restore that right. I ask, why has Maine been the only state to withhold this right of the Wabanaki? We must do what is right and in alignment with the rest of our nation.

I want to remind my representatives that signing into law LD 2007 and restoring self-governance capabilities for the Wabanaki Nations benefits ALL Mainers, especially our neighbors in rural northern Maine in Aroostok, Penobscot, and Washington counties. A 2022 report titled “Federal Indian Policies to the Wabanaki Nations in Maine” by the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development found that tribal self governance would result in the direct and indirect addition of more than 2,700 new jobs, most of whom for the tribes’ neighbors. Passing this law would also add an estimated \$330 million each year to Maine’s gross domestic product, with the benefits of this growth focused in rural Aroostook, Penobscot, and Washington counties.

In a time where the climate crisis is impacting the coast and Gulf of Maine at a disproportional rate — we have seen the storms, the damage, the sea level rise, and the changing of the health of our forests — it is absolutely vital that Indigenous peoples lead the way in building solutions to live more sustainably in our communities.

LD 2007 would be a first step in granting the Wabanaki Nations their inherent right to make decisions for their own communities, and in turn, supports the health of our wider economy, environment, and communities of Maine.

I urge you to vote yes on LD 2007, and I urge Janet Mills to listen to her constituents and the legislators in the House and the Senate, and she should not use her power to veto a bill that a majority of Mainers and legislators support. It is your time to do what is right. Pass LD 2007 now!