

Testimony for LD 2007 (submitted 2.23.24)

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

**From:** Heather Leslie, 4 Pleasant St., Newcastle, ME 04553

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

**Intro:** Sen. Carney, Rep. Moonen and members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Heather Leslie and I live in Newcastle. I am here to testify in support of LD 2007.

I am submitting this testimony because **I believe that passing LD 2007 is the right thing to do: for Wabanaki people in Maine and for all of us – humans and the more than human world - who call Maine home.**

As I have learned more about the history of settler colonialism in Maine and our nation, I have become more and more convinced that we can and must do better than continue to live by an outdated and dysfunctional act that was never meant to be set in stone. Those who drafted the *1980 Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act* called it a “living document” that should not be set in stone as it has been for more than 40 years to the detriment of the Wabanaki and rural Maine communities and the state of Maine. **It is time to modernize this broken deal and begin a new era of partnership with the Wabanaki Nations.**

**As a conservation scientist, I recognize that Maine’s wild and scenic beauty didn’t happen by accident.** The Wabanaki have been protecting the environment and maintaining sustainable ecological practices for millennia, long before European settlement of Maine. They will continue to do so; it is their heritage and birthright as Wabanaki peoples.

**Passing LD 2007 is all about fairness and equity.** Due to restrictions imposed by the *1980 Settlement Act*, the Wabanaki Nations have faced unnecessary obstacles to achieving the significant economic growth experienced by the other 570 federal tribes over the past 40 years who have had full access to federal policies of self-determination. Removing those obstacles would support Wabanaki Nations pursue federal self-determination policies. This is in keeping with agreements made hundreds of years ago that have been in many cases broken and unfulfilled and it is time for us to do better. The federal self-determination policies support programs and funding that elsewhere in Indian Country have created thousands of jobs and hundreds of millions of dollars in goods and services produced by Native businesses.

Thank you for conducting this hearing. I ask that you support LD 2007 because it is the right thing to do for all of us who call Maine home.

Heather Leslie  
Newcastle  
LD 2007

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