

February 26, 2024

To: Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

From: Shirley Hager, 129 Chesterville Hill Road, Chesterville, ME 04938
for the Friends (Quaker) Committee on Maine Public Policy (FCMPP), Committee on Tribal-State Relations

Re: Support for LD 2007, An Act to Advance Self-Determination for Wabanaki Nations, as amended

In testifying in support of LD 2007, I speak on behalf of the Committee on Tribal-State Relations of the Friends (Quaker) Committee on Maine Public Policy. We are a statewide group that, for over thirty years, has advocated for a right and just relationship between the State of Maine and our Wabanaki neighbors. We align ourselves with the advancement of Wabanaki interests to the betterment, we believe, of all who live in Maine, and **we urge you to unanimously support LD 2007, An Act to Advance Self-Determination for Wabanaki Nations, as amended.**

In 2019, the bipartisan Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act met over a six-month period, holding meetings that were open to the public. Around this table, in this Judiciary Committee room, Republicans, Democrats, Wabanaki leaders and state officials shared perspectives, listened, asked questions of one another, and heard from Tribal experts from around the country. They also did a lot of extracurricular reading between meetings. I know this because I attended every one of these very long meetings, to listen and observe, and during this time I was privileged to witness a process that I imagine is pretty rare in the hectic pace of this legislature.

In the beginning, the non-Native members of the Task Force openly admitted to knowing virtually nothing about Federal Indian Law and they had questions--lots of questions--and concerns. As the weeks and months went by, as each topic was presented, experts consulted, and questions answered, each Task Force member became more comfortable, both with the proposed changes to the Settlement Act and with one another. The result was overwhelming agreement on all 22 recommendations to amend the current Settlement Act, proof that when you take the time to understand the issues, and you get to know the people impacted by those issues, minds and hearts are opened.

FCMPP urges this committee to honor the time, the commitment, and the conclusions of the Task Force that reached consensus support of the points contained in this current bill, LD 2007. Do not let their efforts be for naught. It is time that Maine joins the rest of the country in acknowledging the sovereignty of the Indigenous nations within our borders. We strongly urge you to unanimously vote "ought to pass" on LD 2007 as amended. Thank you.

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