

February 23, 2024

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

From: Diane Oltarzewski

RE: My support for LD 2007, An Act to Advance Self-Determination for Wabanaki Nations

Maine has a long and sorry history of deceiving, disinheriting and belittling Wabanaki people.

Despite this history, today we know that Indigenous people are leaders in protecting natural resources, and that we non-Natives have much to learn from them, as the health of our collective ecosystem hangs in the balance.

Today, thanks to the Task Force, we know that the state of Maine's defiance of Federal Indian Law for many decades has been WRONG. The state has selfishly blocked Tribes from legitimate jurisdiction in a number of areas, and people of good conscience must bring this unfairness to a quick and complete end.

When we open the ways for Wabanaki people to build their economy, bring more lands and waters under their protection, and enable a restoration of their cultural traditions and healthy life-ways, we are making Maine – for perhaps the first time – an honorable place to live. A homeland in which we can all take pride and pleasure, with mutual respect and ongoing collaboration.

This is the landscape that the Task Force made possible. Wabanaki and legislative leaders labored long and hard, in good faith, over the various versions of this bill. Citizens far and wide support it without reservation. Our children have the right to grow up in an intelligent society that recognizes past harm and repairs it honestly and efficiently, without further delay.

In this way, LD 2007 can honor all of us. Let's get it done!