

Linda Woods
Waterville
LD 2007

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

From: Linda Woods (3 Vaughan Court, Waterville 04901)

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

Date: February 23, 2024

I am on multiple list serves, mostly related to environmental or religious causes. It is extremely rare that I get requests from all to write testimony in support of an issue. LD 2007 is one that has caused this landslide of requests from Maine Council of Churches, Maine Climate Action Now and the Natural Resources Council of Maine. From reading these messages, I know that more than 1,600 Mainers from all corners of the state testified in record numbers in favor of passing a tribal sovereignty. You have the opportunity to demonstrate bi-partisan support by voting in favor of LD 2007.

Environmental support comes because 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's their heritage and birthright as Wabanaki peoples. Since climate change is adversely affecting our state, I favor this bill to allow the people to continue to protect the state's natural resources.

Faith-based groups recognize that all people need to have access to quality health and education opportunities. The Wabanaki tribes' health, educational and economic outcomes have lagged far behind those of other population groups in Maine and other tribes throughout the country. The average income growth since 1989 has been 61% for tribal citizens not located in Maine, but only 9% for Wabanaki citizens in Maine. (Maine's overall income growth for the same period was 25%.) This causes undo stress on all impacted.

Like all documents, the 1980 Settlement Act needs to be reviewed and updated. The politicians who drafted the 1980 Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act (MICSA) most likely would not want "their document" to deny the Wabanaki the rights accorded to other federally recognized tribes. Unfortunately this has been happening due to restrictions imposed by the the Wabanaki Nations over the past 40 years. It is time for Maine to allow full access to federal policies of self-determination. Removing those obstacles would help the Wabanaki Nations take advantage of federal self-determination policies, programs and funding that elsewhere in Indian Country led to the creation of thousands of jobs and hundreds of millions of dollars in goods and services produced by Native businesses.

I encourage you to vote yes in support of LD 2007. Thank you.