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Maine's Rural Development Council

**Testimony of Nancy Smith, CEO of GrowSmart Maine  
In Support of LD 2007, "An Act to Advance Self-determination for  
Wabanaki Nations"**

February 26, 2024

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary.

My name is Nancy Smith, I live in Ellsworth, and I am the CEO of GrowSmart Maine. We are a statewide non-partisan non-profit organization helping communities navigate change in alignment with smart growth. We advocate for comprehensive policies and funding for smart growth practices and outcomes. Equity is at the core of our work, because without equity, it isn't smart growth.

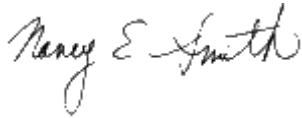
As a member of the Wabanaki Alliance Tribal Coalition since 2022, we support LD 2007 because it enhances equity, economic opportunity, and environmental stewardship. As amended, the bill implements several of the consensus recommendations of the Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act governing the relationship between the State of Maine and the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians, the Passamaquoddy Tribe and the Penobscot Nation. Three points are key to our support:

- **Sovereignty, self-determination, is a matter of equity.** GrowSmart Maine has broadened our understanding of past wrongs done to the Wabanaki people. Following the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Committee, Maine is the first and only state to focus on the impact of child welfare policies on Indian communities and their children — policies historically designed to “kill the Indian, and save the man.” Restoring sovereignty furthers this righting of past wrongs.
- **Economic opportunities** will be expanded per the recent **Harvard Report**. The Settlement Act has been used to exclude the Wabanaki from more than 150 federal laws and policies since October 1980 concerning safe drinking water, housing, health care, managing natural disasters, and many others. Since 1989, growth in personal income in Maine is 25%; in other states it is 17%; for Wabanaki Nations it is 9%. Sovereignty will return to the Wabanaki the right to create economic opportunities which will naturally flow to non-tribal communities.
- **Environmental stewardship:** While Maine can take pride in recent decades of strategic land conservation and regulatory protections for productive and open lands and water to benefit natural resource sector enterprises, recreational users, and fisheries and wildlife, Wabanaki peoples protected these natural resources through sustainable practices for millenia, long before we arrived here. It is appropriate and necessary to respect this heritage with passage and implementation of LD 2007.

GrowSmart Maine is an Equal Opportunity Employer

If invited, GrowSmart Maine is willing to support Wabanaki efforts in creating economic opportunities and sustainable communities in alignment with smart growth. It's time to remove the barriers that have kept the Wabanaki and their rural Maine neighbors from achieving the dramatic and sustained economic growth achieved over the past 40 years by 570 federal tribes across Indian Country.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nancy E. Smith". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

CEO

GrowSmart Maine