

Catherine Cyrus  
Brunswick  
LD 2007

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

From: Catherine Cyrus; 36 Longfellow Avenue; Brunswick, Maine 04011

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

Sen. Carney, Rep. Moonen, and members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Catherine Cyrus, and I live in Brunswick, Maine. I am a long time Maine resident who has loved this beautiful state my whole life (80 years!). I write to urge you to vote in support of LD 2007 An Act to Advance Self Determination for Wabanaki Nations.

Those of us who live in Maine - we who are descendants of the European settlers of a few hundred years ago and the Wabanaki people who have lived on and stewarded this land for thousands of years - share a complex history. It is time to acknowledge together the violence and injustice of the too rarely told stories of the settler taking of the land and the associated conflict that came close to destroying the culture, language and very existence of the Wabanaki people. It is time to recognize that the failure of the state of Maine to recognize the Wabanaki's inherent right to self-determination continues that injustice into the present.

Among the principles of my Unitarian Universalist faith are these: to respect the inherent worth and dignity of every person and to work for justice, equity and compassion in human relations. LD 2007 is all about fairness and equity. The bill will lift the restrictions imposed by the 1980 Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act (MICSA) that have kept the Wabanaki and their neighbors in rural Maine from achieving the economic growth experienced by the other 570 federally recognized tribes (and their neighbors) across the country. MICSA was envisioned as a living document with provisions for amendment. It is past time to modernize this broken agreement and repair and rebuild the partnership between the Wabanaki people and the state of Maine. Research supports the widely held understanding that self-determination in accordance with federal laws that govern the other 570 tribes has resulted in economic growth and job opportunities for tribes across the country. Supporting self-determination and the associated growth and opportunities within the Wabanaki Nations would mean significant growth and thriving for all of us in the state.

Voices all across Maine are asking that we sit down together as equal partners to create the communities that will support all of us to thrive while sustaining the beauty and uniqueness of this place we call home. Please use your voice to guide Maine in recognizing the inherent worth of every person. Together it is possible to build a just, equitable and compassionate state. Vote to support LD 2007.

I thank you for your hard and difficult work.

Catherine Cyrus