

Testimony in support of LD 2007, *An Act to Advance Self-determination for Wabanaki Nations*

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

From: Jennifer Rowland, 162 Capisic St, Portland, ME 04102

Dear Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Jennifer Rowland and I live in Portland. I am an environmental non-profit administrator, and have been involved with a handful of environmental organizations here in Maine over the past decade. I am writing to testify in strong support of LD 2007.

Being that the 1980 Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act (MICSA) did not place Maine's tribes on equal footing with those of the rest of the United States, it's beyond overdue that the State of Maine honor the sovereignty of the Wabanaki Nations and clear a pathway for them to access the resources they are due from federal self-determination policies, programs, and funding that other indigenous nations have been able to access for years. Being a white, female environmentalist here in the State of Maine, and having had the benefit of traveling to so many beautiful places in the United States in my lifetime, I feel strongly that our nation's indigenous peoples - and original stewards - have access to the lands they feel so deeply connected to, and that, at minimum, they receive the federal resources specified for their benefit. This includes the Wabanaki Nations here in Maine.

The State of Maine is facing so many challenges right now - between the opioid epidemic, the affordable housing crisis and increasing numbers of unhoused individuals, the climate crisis and increasing storm severity, these are just a few of the issues that I see Maine facing everyday. Yet there are more, and Maine's economic inequities and struggles are among them, particularly in the rural areas of our state. What if we could both elevate and uplift many of our rural communities by providing the Wabanaki Nations the right to self-determination that is due to them? According to a 2022 study by Harvard, self-government for the tribes would be a boon to Maine's GDP as well as their surrounding communities with related job creation and state and local tax revenue. This seems like a clear win-win for the State of Maine and the Wabanaki Nations.

In closing, I wish to thank you, Sen. Carney, Rep. Moonen, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary, for your service, time, and consideration of this important issue. Maine's tribes deserve to be on equal footing with the rest of the United States' indigenous nations, and providing this pathway would not only right a longstanding and painful inequity but may also benefit the State in both expected and unexpected ways.

Best wishes,

Jennifer Rowland