



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

From: Johnny Sanchez, 119 Meadow Rd, Winterport, ME, on behalf of myself and Food AND Medicine, nonprofit organization located in Brewer.

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

Testimony: Hello, my name is Johnny Sanchez. I work for and submit this on behalf of Food AND Medicine, a nonprofit in Brewer founded in 2002, that organizes around issues of food security, labor rights, and other root causes of poverty. Generally, our mission is to pursue a future in which people do not have to choose between food, medicine and other basic necessities. We have endorsed previous legislation for the purpose of fair treatment for Wabanaki Nations, and strongly support LD 2007 today. We urge you and your fellow lawmakers to pass LD 2007.

This bill is truly about fairness and equity for Wabanaki people. The rights of indigenous nations to self-govern as sovereign bodies influences their access to many of the absolute necessities for which Food AND Medicine advocates in our community. Despite Wabanaki Nations never having ceded the rights guaranteed to them as federally recognized tribes, the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act of 1980 and the state law that accompanied it, the Maine Implementing Act, have resulted in Maine tribes being unable to benefit from more than 150 federal laws passed since 1980. These federal laws have provisions that provide opportunities for self-determination in the form of economic development, increased access to healthcare, response to natural disasters, expanded environmental protections, increased job creation, and protection against the epidemic of violence against native women.

Moreover, there is a significant body of literature describing the extent to which Wabanaki Nations have not been able to prosper as other tribal citizens around the country have, due to the Settlement Act's restrictions. Outside of Maine, tribal citizens have seen their incomes grow over 60% since 1989 while Wabanaki citizens' incomes have only increased 9% (with Maine's overall income increase over the same period being 25%). These restrictions have also resulted in slower growth in health, educational, and economic outcomes. A recent Harvard study has shown that if Wabanaki Nations are able to prosper, there would be broad benefits for Maine as a whole as well.

These are all things that are core to Food AND Medicine's mission and that is why we hope you will commit to support LD 2007 and will remain committed throughout this bill's legislative process.

Thank you.