



February 23, 2024

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

From: Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust, P.O. Box 761, Portland, 04101

Re: Support for LD 2007, An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act

Sen. Carney, Rep. Mooned and members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Simon Rucker and I live in Portland. This testimony is being submitted for the Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust in support of LD 2007, An Act to Advance Self-determination for Wabanaki Nations.

To Senator Carney, Co-Chair, Representative Mooned, Co-chair, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary:

The Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust is a 501c3 nonprofit conservation organization which was established in 2002 and is dedicated to protecting the land along the Appalachian Trail in Maine for public benefit. In contrast, the Wabanaki Tribes including the Penobscot Nation, Passamaquoddy Tribe, Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians, and Aroostook Band of Micmacs – as well as the Abenaki and other tribal communities living in diaspora outside of Maine – have lived in what is now Maine for thousands of years. Throughout those millennia, the Tribes have lived in relationship with the land and waters here and have a track record of managing natural resources so that future generations could thrive.

Our position is that the State of Maine should recognize the Wabanaki Tribes' inherent sovereignty through the passage of LD 2007, which would ensure that the Tribes here in Maine enjoy substantially the same rights as other federally-recognized Tribes in the United States. In 2020, a bipartisan task force recommended 22 changes to the Settlement Act to avoid and help settle future disputes between the State and Tribes, to remove some of the barriers preventing the Tribes from purchasing land, and to restore recognition of the Tribes' inherent rights. Those include the Tribes' rights to regulate hunting, fishing, natural resources, and land use on Tribal lands and waters, as allowed by federal law.

This organization also believes that strengthening the ability of the Tribes to own and manage land and resources complements conservation efforts in Maine, including those lands in the Appalachian Trail region of the state. Recognizing inherent tribal sovereignty via LD 2007 will not only ensure that rights are restored to the Tribes - which in itself is a benefit to all of Maine - it will ensure that we have a conservation partner with thousands of years of traditional ecological knowledge working with us.