

February 23, 2024

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

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

My name is Andrea Breau, and like 3 generations of my Franco-American ancestors, I live in Lewiston on unceded Wabanaki territory. I'm the mother of a young child as well as a visiting professor of Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies at Colby College. I'm writing today in support of LD 2007.

Why does a non-native mother and gender studies teacher care about tribal sovereignty? I am currently teaching a course on Reproductive Justice. This movement is driven by three basic, human rights principles: 1) the right not to have children, 2) the right to have children, and 3) the right to parent children in healthy, sustainable environments and safe communities.

Just this past week my students and I have been discussing the sad truth that when tribal nations are prevented from exercising their inherent right to self govern, securing these rights is nearly impossible. And when these rights are under threat, women and young people are disproportionately harmed.

We can see these truths in all too recent Maine history.

I'm thinking here of restrictions in the 1980 Settlement Acts that prevented the Passamaquoddy Tribe at Sipayik from utilizing federal funds to guarantee clean drinking water in their community, where water samples showed elevated levels of chemicals linked to adverse reproductive outcomes. Reduced fertility and preventable birth defects are scary enough, but try maintaining a healthy pregnancy, giving birth, or feeding an infant without access to potable water! Tribal self-governance guarantees the right to protect water. Clean water is reproductive justice.

I'm also thinking here of how, due again to the 1980 Settlement Acts, until passage of the Maine Child Welfare Act in June of last year, only Penobscot and Passamaquoddy children were shielded by the federal Indian Child Welfare Act. Self-governance guarantees the right to raise your own children in your own communities. Keeping families together in strong, culturally-rooted communities is reproductive justice.

When you cannot self-govern, you cannot guarantee your right to have children or your right to parent those children in healthy, sustainable environments and safe communities. Supporting LD 2007 is just one step you can take today toward securing reproductive justice for all.

LD 1007 ***is*** reproductive justice.

Thank you for your work and service to *all* the peoples of Maine.