



**Maine Unitarian Universalist
State Advocacy Network**
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Maine 130^{1st} Legislature – Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary
Testimony in Favor of LD 2007 – An Act to Advance Self-Determination for Wabanaki Nations
February 26, 2024

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of LD 2007,
An Act to Advance Self-Determination for Wabanaki Nations.

My name is Meret Bainbridge, I use she / her pronouns and I live in Saco.

I am here to speak on behalf of the Maine Unitarian Universalist State Advocacy Network. MUUSAN links Maine's 26 Unitarian Universalist congregations in active legislative ministry. I also speak on behalf of my church, First Parish of Portland, Unitarian Universalist. Our faith tradition is dedicated to justice, equity, and compassion in all human relations.

Justice and equity have been denied to the Wabanaki tribes since the Settlement Acts of 1980 have favored the State of Maine, making the tribes subject to State laws and regulations, denying them self-governance on their own lands, and treating them as municipalities rather than the Sovereign Nations they are and have always been.

Maine likes to consider itself an exemplary leader among states – but when it comes to tribal sovereignty, the subordinate status of Maine's tribes makes a shameful example of the State of Maine.

We believe that churches and faith-based organizations have a responsibility to be allies to the tribes. Churches played a big part in the atrocities committed against indigenous peoples that were "justified" with the Doctrine of Christian Discovery that considered white, Christian colonizers superior to brown-skinned non-Christian people: This led to land theft, genocide, child theft and forced assimilation. The founders of my own church were involved in financing and equipping a scalp bounty posse against Penobscot people. We are now reckoning with owning this history and with making amends.

Implementing the 22 Task Force recommendations from 2020 would restore sovereignty to the Wabanaki Nations and be a step towards righting these past wrongs. Opposition to this is still rooted in a colonialist viewpoint that the tribes cannot be trusted with taking care of their own affairs and must be regulated by the State. We disagree. The Wabanaki have been stewards of this beautiful land we now call Maine for more than 10,000 years in a sustainable way. If we want to counteract the effects of climate change and preserve our natural environment, we would be wise to listen to their guidance.

In the name of justice and equality, I urge you to vote in favor of passing LD 2007 in its full language.

Thank you for allowing me to speak and for listening.