

Jonathan Wilcox  
Paris  
LD 2007

RE: LD 2007, An Act to Advance Self-determination for Wabanaki Nations  
Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and members of the Joint Standing  
Committee on Judiciary:

My name is Jonathan Wilcox. I am a resident of the town of Paris and am testifying in support of LD 2007, Ought to Pass.

I submit these remarks as a citizen of Maine, a member of the human race that believes that if any one person or group is oppressed then everyone is oppressed; am a supporter of the Unitarian Universalist faith tradition, which affirms and promotes justice, equity and compassion in human relations, and the inherent worth and dignity of every person.

I believe LD 2007 should become law because the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act of 1980, which LD2007 would amend, has put the Wabanaki tribes in a category separate from all other federally recognized tribes in the U.S. and has stifled the Tribes' right to self-determination, causing both cultural and economic hardship.

Maine's tribes should enjoy the same sovereign status and the same rights, powers, and responsibilities as the other 570-plus federally recognized Indian tribes.

Tribes in Maine (and therefore Maine itself) has not benefited from more than 150 federal laws passed since 1980. According to the recent 2022 Harvard Report\*, self-government for the tribes would likely mean an additional \$330 million a year in Maine's Gross Domestic Product, more than 2,700 jobs, and \$39 million a year in state and local tax revenue. Based on the experience of other tribes, better than half the new jobs created are likely to be filled by neighbors of Wabanaki tribes in rural Maine. When the Wabanaki thrive, so will rural Maine. This state legislation can fix this issue.

Most impacted, according to the U.S. Census data in 2019, childhood poverty rates within Wabanaki communities range from a low of 40% at the Passamaquoddy Tribe at Motahkomikuk community to a high of 77% for the Mi'kmaq Nation in Aroostook County. By comparison, Maine's childhood poverty rate for the same period is 15%.

For all these reasons, I believe the State of Maine has a moral imperative to respect and help restore the Wabanaki peoples' sovereignty and right to self-determination and I urge you to vote "Ought to Pass" on LD 2007.

Thank you,

Jonathan Wilcox

\*Note:

In 2022, the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development, now the Project on Indigenous Governance and Development at the Harvard Kennedy School, report link:

<https://wabanakialliance.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/2022-12-2-Economic-Social-Impacts-Fed-Indian-Policies-to-Wabanaki-Nations-final.pdf>