

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

From: Elizabeth Schultz
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The First Parish in Portland, Maine, Unitarian Universalist's Wabanaki Ally Team
March Forth, Portland, ME
Maine Unitarian Universalist State Advocacy Network (MUUSAN)

RE: **L.D. 2007, An Act to Advance Self-Determination for Wabanaki Nations**

I am part of a coalition of several groups that has been working on tribal issues in Maine for many years. As a member of the First Parish in Portland, Unitarian Universalist, I am committed to our principles of the inherent worth and dignity of every person, justice, equity, and compassion in human relations.

The Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act (MICSA) has harmed the Wabanaki Nations in multiple ways. It has inhibited them from achieving the economic growth experienced by the other 570 federal tribes over the past 40 years. These tribes have full access to federal policies of self-determination. By reducing these barriers, it will enable the Wabanaki nations to create jobs, decrease poverty rates, and improve their well-being (both economically and health-wise).

What is most disturbing to me is the impact these restrictions have on the children in Wabanaki communities. While Maine's childhood poverty rate (U.S. Census data, 2019) is 15%, the rates for the Wabanaki communities range from 40% to 77%. I think it's reasonable to conclude that these rates are exacerbated by the Covid pandemic and its aftermath.

As Sherri Mitchell, Penobscot activist, attorney, and educator, wrote in her book, *Sacred Instructions* (2018), **"We are living in a time of exposure, where the light of truth is shining into all the dark corners of our lives. As a result, all that has been lurking in the shadows is now coming into sharp focus."**

The light is now focused on this "dark corner" of Maine history. We have the tools and knowledge to make amends, to address these inequities, and to solve the problem. It can be done and it must be done.

I encourage you support LD 2007. The time is now to improve the lives of the people in the Wabanaki Nations and the lives of future generations of Mainers.

Thank you, committee members, for your diligence, hard work, and commitment to the correcting a series of wrong steps in Maine's history.

Respectfully,
Elizabeth Schultz