

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

From: Faith Barnes, 15 Beech Dr., Brunswick, 04011

Re: Support for LD 2007, An Act to Advance Self-determination for Wabanaki Nations

Intro: Sen. Carney, Rep. Moonen and members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Faith Barnes and I live in Brunswick. I am submitting my testimony in writing in support of LD 2007.

Testimony: I believe that Maine legislators must enact changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act (also known as the Maine Implementing Act) for the benefit of the four Wabanaki Nations in Maine. As a retired school social worker, I saw the impact of poverty on children - lower self-esteem, inability to learn and to meet the necessary benchmarks to be successful in school. **Compared to the rest of Maine, the Wabanaki child poverty rate is almost four times higher.** Maine is one of the poorest states in the nation and to add this additional burden to Wabanaki Nations' families is unconscionable.

One of the many things we value in this country is independence, the ability to work, and to support one's family. In my social work practice, I witnessed the impact of joblessness on families - increase in domestic violence and substance use. The current Maine laws are written to keep Wabanaki Nations' people at a disadvantage to non-tribal Maine citizens. According to the [Harvard Report](#), between 1989 and 2018, income in Maine grew 25%, while income growth for Wabanaki citizens was just 9%. **In 2021, the average income for Mainers was more than twice as high as Wabanaki citizens'.** It is estimated by research reports that the passage of LD 2007... would add an estimated \$330 million each year to Maine's gross domestic product, with the benefits of this growth concentrated in rural and economically deprived portions of Aroostook, Penobscot, and Washington counties.

Closing: I'd like to thank the Committee Members for their attention to LD 2007 and for their consideration of my written testimony. Childhood poverty impacts children's self-esteem, ability to learn, and success in school. When adults are unable to find work and support their families, it can lead to low self-esteem, substance abuse, and domestic violence. Finally, the benefits to the neighboring communities in some of the poorest counties in Maine cannot be overstated. Thank you for your time and consideration.