

To: Sen. Carney, Rep. Moonen, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary
From: Abigail Nelson, 154 York Street, Portland, ME 04101
Re: Support for LD 2007, An Act to Advance Self-determination for Wabanaki Nations

Dear Sen. Carney, Rep. Hartnett and members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Abigail Nelson and I live in Portland. I am a small business owner, with a retail store, also based in Portland. I am writing today to express my support for LD 2007 and to ask for your support in passing this bill and restoring the inherent sovereignty of the Wabanaki Nations.

I love living and working in Maine. A large part of what makes me feel “at home” here is the sense of community and the ways in which people look out for each other. Growing up in Maine, and attending school here, I was never taught about the absolute atrocities that white settlers (my ancestors) inflicted on the Wabanki people, the original and rightful stewards of our beautiful land and waters. As an adult I did not, until recently, seek out information or spend time considering what it means to live, own property, and operate a business (of which I profit from) on stolen land. I am committed to doing better and I want Maine to do better as well.

I share my personal narrative and experience, because I imagine it may also be the case for many white and non-Native representatives, law makers, and citizens throughout Maine. I hope you agree that we must prioritize long-overdue justice for Wabanaki Nations, and passing LD 2007 is an important and impactful step toward removing social and economic barriers and restoring self-governance.

As you are aware, for over 40 years Maine has used the “Settlement Acts” to exert control and jurisdiction over Wabanaki tribal affairs, of which is not precedent in any other state, and which does not align with rights “extended” to all other federally recognized tribal nations. This is a civil rights issue, an equity issue, and a chance to *begin* to address a horribly shameful and unjust part of Maine’s history that continues to this day. Passing LD 2007 is a step toward acknowledging and righting these injustices.

I write today in hope that you agree and will take action to support and ensure the sovereignty of Wabanaki Nations. This will benefit everyone, across Maine, and will also be a signal to those who may wish to relocate and join our community that we are actively acknowledging our shameful past, addressing issues of inequity, and working toward a more sustainable and just future for our State and all of its people.

Thank you for your consideration,

Abigail