

Support LD 2007 for the Betterment of Maine and the Wabanaki Nations

As a devoted resident of Maine for over a decade, a small business owner deeply invested in our community, and an advocate for underserved populations, I urge you to consider the critical importance of LD 2007. Here are three compelling reasons why this legislation is necessary and imperative for advancing the Wabanaki Nations and the entire state of Maine.

Maine is falling behind, and it's time to catch up. While other states experience a 30-year economic boom in Indian Country, our Wabanaki communities are left struggling due to the restrictive nature of the Settlement Act. This disparity is stark: while tribal citizens elsewhere have seen income growth of 61% since 1989, Wabanaki citizens in Maine have experienced a mere 9% increase. We cannot ignore that Maine's overall income growth is 25% for the same period. Easing the Settlement Act's constraints will empower the Wabanaki Nations to harness federal self-determination policies successfully, mirroring the successes of 570 other tribes nationwide.

The Settlement Act was never intended to be static. The very architects of the 1980 Settlement Act envisioned it as a "living document" adaptable to the evolving needs of our communities. Yet, for over four decades, it has remained rigid to the detriment of the Wabanaki and rural Maine communities. It's time to honor the spirit of this legislation and embrace change. MICSA offers a pathway to modernize this outdated agreement, fostering a new era of collaboration and prosperity between Maine and the Wabanaki Nations.

Economic restrictions disproportionately affect our children. Perhaps the most heartbreaking consequence of the status quo is the alarming rates of childhood poverty within Wabanaki communities. From the Passamaquoddy Tribe to the Mi'kmaq Nation, our children face poverty rates ranging from 40% to a staggering 77%. This starkly contrasts Maine's overall childhood poverty rate of 15%. LD 2007 presents an opportunity to address this injustice head-on, ensuring a brighter future for our youngest and most vulnerable citizens.

In conclusion, LD 2007 is not merely a piece of legislation; it's a lifeline for the Wabanaki Nations and a catalyst for progress in Maine. By supporting this bill, we signal our commitment to fairness, economic growth, and the well-being of all our residents. Let us seize this opportunity to build a more inclusive and prosperous future for Maine and future generations.