

Francis Moulton
Ashland
LD 2007

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

From: Francis Moulton, 1145 Frenchville Rd., Ashland, ME 04732

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

My name is Francis Moulton and I live in Ashland. I am here to testify in support of
LD 2007.

Restrictions imposed by the 1980 Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act (MICSA),
have prevented the Wabanaki Nations from achieving the significant economic
growth experienced by the other 570 federal tribes over the past 40 years who've had
full access to federal policies of self-determination. In 2022, the Harvard Project on
American Indian Economic Development published a report on the economic impact
of the 1980 Settlement Acts on the Wabanaki Nations and surrounding communities.
Outside of Maine, there has been a 30-year economic boom going on in Indian
Country. In Maine, since 1989 general growth in personal income has been 25%, but
for Wabanaki Nations it is only 9%. Furthermore, the Settlement Act has been used to
exclude the Wabanaki from more than 150 federal laws and policies since October
1980 concerning safe drinking water, housing, health care, managing natural
disasters, and many others. The exclusion also harms other Mainers - for example,
other federally recognized tribes can apply for disaster relief funds from the federal
government, funding that benefits those tribes and their non-tribal neighbors, bringing
more disaster relief to their states overall.

Self-government for tribes improves government accountability in general because
decision makers are local, thus faster and more responsive to the needs of tribal
citizens and the surrounding communities. Autonomy will result in improved health
care and education success for tribal citizens, while acknowledging demographic and
cultural distinctions between natives and non-indigenous citizens that facilitate
negotiation processes for legislation that affect these populations differently.

As a current resident and former frequent visitor to Maine for recreational purposes, I
appreciate the care and consideration which the Wabanaki have demonstrated in
trying to maintain the ecosystem health of their lands while still permitting limited
recreational use by the general public. This sets a model for good long term
governance that the state of Maine would do well to emulate, considering the legacy
of pollution, disrespect, and resource depletion left by historical state policies for
forest and river management, for example.

I think it is incumbent on the Maine legislature to fully acknowledge the sovereignty
of the indigenous peoples preceding them in use and occupation of our shared
territory and to grant them full responsibility and equality in the process of
determining the future of our environmental and economic heritage, bearing in mind
that the economy is a human invention, entirely subject to our will and design, while
the environment is much greater than this and not fully subject to human
comprehension or manipulation. Avoid hubris, and learn to cooperate, please, while
we still can.