

Testimony in support of LD 2007, *An Act to Advance Self-determination for Wabanaki Nations*

**To: Sen. Carney, Rep. Moonen, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on
Judiciary From: Kathleen Epstein
4 Marshall Ave
Bath, Maine 05430**

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Dear Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and members of the Judiciary Committee, thank you for considering my testimony. My name is Kathleen Epstein. I am a social scientist and a resident of Bath, Maine. I am writing to testify in strong support of LD 2007.

First and foremost, I support LD 2007 as a matter of equity and justice. This bill aims to restore to the Wabanaki Nations in Maine the same privileges and rights enjoyed by the other 570 federally recognized tribes in the US. By doing so, we rectify historical injustices and affirm the inherent sovereignty of indigenous peoples. Upholding tribal self-governance is not merely a legal or political matter; it is a moral imperative that speaks to the principles of fairness and equality that should underpin our society.

Furthermore, I support restoring tribal rights because, as a social scientist and expert in community development, I believe it will bring collective prosperity for the state of Maine as a whole. According to a research study by [Harvard University](#), the benefits of LD 2007 and restoring Wabanaki Nation's self-governance include an estimated \$330 million increase in Maine's gross domestic product and over 2,700 new jobs, with a majority of new employment opportunities realized outside of Tribal communities.

Lastly, it is crucial to recognize the historical context in which this bill operates. For centuries, Indigenous peoples in the United States, including the Wabanaki, have endured dispossession, discrimination, and systemic marginalization at the hands of the federal and state governments. While progress has been made, structural racism still pervades aspects of our society, including legal and political systems. LD 2007 represents an important step towards dismantling systems of oppression and forging a more equitable future for *all* Mainers. By acknowledging injustices of the past and taking concrete steps to address them, we can begin to build a society that truly respects the rights and dignity of all its members. LD 2007 is not just about restoring tribal rights; it is about affirming our commitment to justice, reconciliation, and a future where every individual and community can thrive.

Thank you for the opportunity to give testimony.