

**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 Sullivan, 50 Moose Crossing, Freeport, Maine, 04032

February 25, 2024

Dear Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and Members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Katheen Sullivan and I live in Freeport. I am a member of the Indigenous History Committee of the Freeport Historical Society and Coordinator of Freeport Climate Action Now. I am also a Licensed Clinical Social Worker with a longtime practice and a writer. I am writing to testify in support of LD 2007.

**Testimony:**

My support for this bill is based on my experience of extensive reading and exploration of the 11,000 year history of the Wabanaki on this land in Maine and the 500 years of colonial contact and settlement. To say that that experience “blew my mind” is an understatement. The land I live on at this very moment is inhabited by the spirits of the Wabanaki who were once part of a thriving community which fished, farmed, hunted and cared for this land according to ecological principles which we sorely need to learn and apply now.

Year after year we made treaties with the Wabanaki, then broke them over and over again. We dammed the rivers they used for salmon fishing to keep them from traveling to their winter homeland. We gave them blankets infected with smallpox. We fenced in their land with those romantic rock walls and stole their homeland. Then we called them savages and scalped them. We took their children away and sent them to Christian boarding schools where they were abused. My horror and grief over this history has no end.

This history matters when considering this bill. When the Settlement Act was signed in 1980, it was, like many other treaties before this, signed under duress. They agreed to it because they had no real choice. Sign or lose a previously land and monetary claim they had worked out with the Carter Administration. They signed. But they were told that they would have a chance to change it in the future. That has never happened.

The arguments against it effectively come down to the state saying, “a deal’s a deal,” and the law would be too complicated to enforce. The irony of the *deals a deal* stance after all the deals we

didn't honor with the Tribes is horrifyingly obvious. The fact that the governor says enforcing it would be too difficult also can hardly be taken with a straight face. No one I know has been able to figure out why our Governor objects so strongly to this bill.

**Closing:**

Thank you all for putting forward this bill again. There are many good legal reasons to support this, but too there are reasons that have to do with the heart and the soul, with empathy and justice. I trust all of you on the committee will allow those considerations to move you.

With appreciation for all you do,

Kathleen Sullivan, LCSW