

Claudia Hatch
Woolwich, ME 04579, USA
LD 2007

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

From: Claudia R. Hatch, 17 Touassic Lane, Woolwich, Maine 04579

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

Sen. Carney, Rep. Moonen and members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Claudia Hatch, and I live in the town of Woolwich. In 2022, the annual meeting of the Maine Conference of the United Church of Christ voted to support efforts that affirm tribal sovereignty. As a member of a United Church of Christ in Maine and our denomination's anti-racism resource team, I firmly support LD 2007. I am a seventh-generation member of the Reed family who have lived on Mount Desert Island. My ancestors came to the Massachusetts Bay Colony in the 1630's. I have been proud of my ancestry and the part they have played in the formation of this state and this country. However, as a child and not until well into my adulthood did, I have any teaching regarding the devastating impact that colonialism had on Indigenous People. Over the last few years, I have come to realize that the legacy of colonialism is not just something of the past but something that continues to degrade the welfare of our Wabanaki neighbors and our communities. According to the U.S. Census data in 2019, childhood poverty rates within Wabanaki communities range from a low of 40% at the Passamaquoddy Tribe at Motahkomikuk community to a high of 77% for the Mi'kmaq Nation in Aroostook County. By comparison, Maine's childhood poverty rate for the same period is 15%. I am truly ashamed that our State has continued to block opportunities for bettering the lives of the Indigenous People who have lived in this area we call the State of Maine for over 10,000 years. We are not living up to the slogan posted at our borders, "Maine – The way life should be." Not only are we hurting the Wabanaki People, but we are hurting economic development and welfare of many other communities in the State as well. Easing the Settlement Act's restrictions will enable the Wabanaki Nations to take full advantage of federal self-determination policies that are very clearly benefiting 570 other tribes and nearby communities across the country. The average income growth since 1989 has been 61% for tribal citizens not located in Maine, but only 9% for Wabanaki citizens in Maine. According to the recent Harvard Report, self-government for the tribes would likely mean an additional \$330 million a year in Maine's Gross Domestic Product, more than 2,700 jobs, and \$39 million a year in state and local tax revenue, with the benefits of this growth concentrated in rural and economically deprived portions of Aroostook, Penobscot, and Washington counties. Mainers understand that passing LD 2007 is about fairness and equity. Recognizing the Wabanaki Nations' inherent right to self-govern helps move the Wabanaki Nations and the state of Maine forward together, with improved economic opportunity and renewed partnership among neighbors for the welfare of us all. Thank you for your time and interest in this very important legislation.