

TO: Senator Carney
Representative Moonen, Co-Chairs
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

FROM: Lane Sturtevant, 40 Oyster River Road Warren, Maine 04864

DATE: February 25th, 2024

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

Dear Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and other members of the committee,

My name is Lane Sturtevant. I'm a resident of Warren. I'm writing to urge you to vote in support of LD 2007, An Act to Advance Self-determination for Wabanaki Nations.

When I moved to Maine for college, I wasn't aware that Maine was the only state to deny the full sovereignty of the federally recognized tribes within its borders. It was disappointing to learn this about the place that I had decided to call home. Maine is unique in so many ways, many of which Mainers are rightfully proud of. But our state's relationship to the Wabanaki is ignominious.

I have been following the efforts to improve the relationship between our state government and the Wabanaki tribes for the last decade, ever since I learned about the history of the Maine Land Claims Settlement Act. I have seen how our state leaders have used fear mongering and a zero-sum understanding of justice to excuse their continued mistreatment of our indigenous neighbors.

The thing is, treating the Wabanaki Nations fairly does not mean that non-indigenous Mainers lose out. Quite the opposite: allowing Wabanaki Nations access to the economic opportunities that come along with full sovereignty will in turn strengthen the economic conditions of rural Mainers in Downeast Maine and other regions by creating jobs and generating tax revenue.

Fully recognizing the sovereignty of the Wabanaki would be an economical and environmental win for all Mainers. Fundamentally, though, it's about fairness. Every other federally recognized tribe has the right to self-determination, why not the Wabanaki tribes? I want to live in a state where our leaders have the moral courage to build a respectful and mutually beneficial relationship with the Wabanaki Nations, instead of treating them as adversaries for daring to ask for the same rights as all other tribes in this country. I am urging this committee to vote in support of LD 2007 and take a step toward that relationship.