

Mary Ellen Quinn  
Pax Christi Maine  
LD 2007

Hearing date: February 26, 2024

LD 2007 - "An Act to Advance Self-determination for Wabanaki Nations" -  
Testimony by Mary Ellen Quinn and Denise Dreher on behalf of Pax Christi Maine

Dear Sen.Carney, Rep.Moonen and members of the Judiciary Committee,

We are writing on behalf of Pax Christi Maine in support of LD 2007. Pax Christi is part of an international movement based on Catholic Social Teaching, which includes the principles of a call to community, rights and responsibilities, care for God's creation, and solidarity. Support of right relationship with our Wabanaki neighbors exemplifies all of these principles.

It is unacceptable that tribes in Maine are held back by an outdated agreement with the state, while the other 570 tribes across the United States are moving ahead with new laws, rights, and responsibilities that the Wabanaki tribes are not able to access. A recent study of economic development shows that tribes in Maine lag far behind those in other states and it proves that barriers erected by the 1980 Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act are the cause. Wabanaki children are especially hard hit with poverty and lack of opportunity. Self-determination will allow the tribes to take care of their own communities while providing their children with a place within their culture. That economic prosperity and stability has also been shown to benefit surrounding communities.

Wabanaki people have cared for and protected the land and water that we now call Maine for millennia. In recognizing the sovereignty of the tribes, we acknowledge the depth of their connection with this territory.

Christian churches, organizations, and people are responsible for much of the suffering of Indigenous people in North America. Standing in solidarity with the Wabanaki people in this effort to recognize their inherent sovereignty does not undo the damage, but does work to move us forward in a new direction.

As we begin the third century of the state of Maine, it's time to make sure all people living inside its boundaries have the rights they deserve. We urge you to vote in favor of LD 2007.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Mary Ellen Quinn, Winterport  
Denise Dreher, Biddeford  
Pax Christi Maine, Co-coordinators