



February 25, 2024

Senator Anne Carney  
Representative Matt Moonen  
Joint Standing Committee on the Judiciary  
Maine State Legislature  
c/o Legislative Information Office  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333

**RE: Written Testimony in Support of LD 2007: An Act to Advance Self-determination for Wabanaki Nations**

Dear Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and the distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on the Judiciary:

My name is Richard A. Hooks Wayman, and I am a resident of Portland and serve as the President & CEO for Volunteers of America Northern New England, a housing, homeless, and social service nonprofit organization which is headquartered in Brunswick. I offer this written testimony in support of LD 2007. Volunteers of America (VOA) Northern New England is a faith-based nonprofit that works with households experiencing deep poverty, disabilities, and homelessness. Many of our housing sites are in rural towns across nine counties in Maine. Every day we witness disparities in public health and homelessness for persons of color in Maine.

LD 2007 should be passed on the simple principle that all indigenous nations in America hold inherent rights to self-determination. The Wabanaki Nations in Maine should be entitled to self-governance and self-determination to advance the economic and health wellbeing of their community. This bill would enact 22 consensus recommendations reached by a bipartisan task force in 2020 that would expand the authority of all four tribes within the Wabanaki Nation to improve the wellbeing of its members.

The lack of self-determination and historical oppression against American Indians have led to entrenched child poverty. 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 was 15%.

These reforms should be enacted now. Thank you for your public service and consideration of this testimony.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Richard A. Hooks Wayman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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