

Katie Liberman  
Deer Isle  
LD 2007

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: Katie Liberman, 39 Stanley Field Drive, Deer Isle, ME 04627

Dear Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Katie Liberman and I live in Deer Isle. I am an educator and a supporter of Wabanaki self-determination. I am writing to testify in support of LD 2007.

For far too long, Wabanaki people have been denied their rights by various iterations of the Maine and United States governments. There are vast economic barriers that are imposed upon tribal communities here due to the restrictions imposed by the 1980 Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act (MICSA). The Wabanaki Nations have been kept from achieving the significant economic growth experienced by the other 570 federal tribes over the past 40 years who've had full access to federal policies of self-determination. Children are impacted by economic inequalities the most in this situation. 2019 Childhood poverty rates in tribal communities in Maine ranged from 40% (Passamaquoddy Tribe at Motahkomikuk community) to 77% (Mi'kmaq Nation in Aroostook County). Compared to the Maine state childhood poverty average of 15%, this is absolutely unacceptable and unfair.

I see firsthand the effects of childhood poverty on my students and wish that upon no one. Children whose only meals are at school, children who don't have access to warm winter gear, and children who don't know where they will sleep. That kind of stuff has lasting impacts on children for years—sometimes for life. In a community where most children do have access to everything they need, it's hard to imagine the amount of students I see struggling with poverty increase to levels that tribal communities in Maine deal with. We can do better. We can fix this by enabling Wabanaki nations to have the self-determination that they always should have had. It's time to remove any barriers in the way for Wabanaki nations to enjoy the prosperity of economic growth and stability as the other 570 federally recognized tribal nations do because of self-determination.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter. Mending the relationship between the Maine government and Wabanaki nations is a worthwhile journey, and supporting LD 2007 is a good first step. This state would benefit from all people being able to experience economic prosperity. All children deserve to live their lives in peace and financial security and prosperity.

Sincerely,  
Katie Liberman