

To: Sen. Carney, Rep. Moonen, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary
From: Doretta M. Colburn, 630 Valley Road Waterford 04088, clergy – United Church of Christ.

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 Doretta M. Colburn and I live in Waterford. I am writing in support of LD 2007.

I am an ordained United Church of Christ pastor privileged to have served several churches over the past thirty years, including the one I currently serve in western Maine. Equity and justice have always been the center of my ministry and life. The words of the Late Archbishop Desmond Tutu captures best what I believe to be true: “My humanity is bound up in yours, for we can only be human together.” It is from this belief regarding the common good, that I speak to the fairness and equity that we owe to our Wabanaki neighbors with whom we share this lovely State of Maine.

For too long, the indigenous people of this State have been held back and held down by unreasonable settlements that were never meant to be set in stone. The Settlement Act of 1980 was referred to as a “living document” and in that vein it is time a constructive and beneficial partnership be created that fosters prosperity and growth for the Wabanaki which in turn will only stand to benefit all citizens of the State of Maine. Indeed, there is great truth in the statement: “When the Wabanaki Thrive, We All Thrive.”

Unlike the other 570 tribes throughout the United States, the Wabanaki have not been given the opportunities for economic growth that others have had the benefit of acquiring and thus, the Wabanaki people lag behind in health and education, in particular. Since 1989 tribes outside of Maine have shown an income growth of 61%, while Wabanaki citizens in Maine have only shown a 9% income growth over that same period of time. This reality has serious and detrimental effects on the Wabanaki as a whole, and even more so on tribal youth who have become the victims of unreasonable rates of childhood poverty.

It is inconceivable that the issue of Wabanaki rights, of self-determination, of partnership in the economic growth and overall health of the environment, has yet to be ruled a right of their citizenship. It is astonishing, that in 2024, such inequality continues to stand in the way of fairness and equity. The wellbeing of us all, rides on the wellbeing of the Wabanaki people for we cannot disregard that we are all interconnect with one another.

Thank you for this opportunity to share my thoughts. I urge you to vote “ought to pass” on LD 2007.

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Doretta M. Colburn