



Grandmothers For Reproductive Rights

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Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on the Judiciary,

My name is Cait Vaughan, and I write as the interim Executive Director of Grandmothers for Reproductive Rights (GRR!) to urge you in the strongest terms to vote in favor of passage for **LD 2007, *An Act to Advance Self-determination for Wabanaki Nations***. GRR! builds the personal and collective power of grandmothers and elders to work—intergenerationally and through the lens of reproductive justice—to assure sexual and reproductive rights for present and future generations.

Self-determination is at the core of everything GRR! believes in and organizes for, because personal autonomy cannot be fully exercised without a collective context of self-determination. For decades, the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act of 1980 has harmed the Wabanaki Nations, denying the Indigenous peoples of this land over 150 rights afforded to all other federally recognized tribal nations. The original stewards of Maine's woods and waters, who have survived centuries of colonialism, endure some of the worst effects of contemporary inequity, including: higher rates of poverty, less health care access, higher rates of children separated from families and in state care, poor perinatal health outcomes, and higher rates of sexual and domestic violence than non-Natives. The ongoing humanitarian crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) is barely addressed outside of Native communities. The solutions to these problems will only begin to emerge when tribal sovereignty is acknowledged.

Wabanaki peoples have an inherent human right to all the tools needed for their communities to thrive—on their terms. LD 2007 would make more resources and power available to Indigenous communities in Maine to experience economic development and address issues of health inequity, among others. Most importantly, LD 2007 is a critical step in repairing a centuries-long relationship of legitimate mistrust between tribes and Maine's state government. Acknowledging tribal sovereignty is the minimum step necessary to advance a better future for all. When Indigenous peoples thrive, we will know we are addressing root causes of inequity. We urge you to vote Ought To Pass on LD 2007.

Respectfully,

Cait Vaughan
Portland, ME

Grandmothers for Reproductive Rights (GRR!) works, through education and advocacy, to secure access to sexual & reproductive health, rights & justice for present & future generations.