

Date: Feb 25, 2024

To: Sen. Carney, Rep. Moonen, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

From: Margo Lukens, 17 Pierce Street, Orono, 04473. Professor *emerita*, University of Maine; Co-Chair of Decolonizing UMaine

Re: Support for LD 2007, An Act to Advance Self-determination for Wabanaki Nations

Dear Senator Carney, Representative Moonen and members of the Judiciary Committee,

For over 30 years I made my home and my livelihood in Orono as a professor at the University of Maine. Since I arrived here I have been learning about Wabanaki history and culture, and doing my best to transmit what I learn to my students, friends, and family. Over these years I have also developed many relationships with Wabanaki people who have been students in my classes, colleagues, collaborators, fellow thespians, or simply friends. I want to testify in support of LD 2007 because my relationships with Penobscot and other Wabanaki people are central to my work as a professor *emerita*, as a volunteer, and as a citizen of the State of Maine.

My most recent publication project is a bilingual book called "*Still They Remember Me*": *Penobscot Transformer Tales, volume 1* (2021). I worked on this volume with Carol Dana, language carrier of the Penobscot Nation, who saw the need for a new publication of old stories, to bring young Penobscot people back to their birthright language. These are ancient stories of the Penobscot people that connect them intimately and permanently with the land of our region, the lakes and rivers, and nonhuman creatures. Working so closely with these stories has shown me the terrible irony of our state, where the government of Maine has worked for the past two centuries to disempower the Indigenous communities in Maine, and to separate them from the land and waters of their traditional territory.

LD 2007 will give the Indigenous peoples of Maine the right to determine their communities' futures. They should have that right in their homelands without obstruction from the state of Maine. When Wabanaki communities finally have the right to self-determination, it will benefit all of us who live in Maine. For millennia, Wabanaki peoples have been good stewards of the land and natural resources—their traditional literatures teach the value of conserving all kinds of resources for the benefit of generations to come. Securing the future of Wabanaki nations will help protect Maine's environment for all who live here.

I thank the committee for hearing our testimony on LD 2007, and urge support. This bill gives us the opportunity to stand by our Penobscot, Passamaquoddy, Maliseet and Mi'kmaq neighbors. When they prosper, Maine prospers.

