

To: Sen. Carney, Rep. Moonen, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary
From: John G. (“Gray”) Cox, 9 ½ Cleftstone Road, Bar Harbor, ME 04609, Clerk of Acadia Friends Meeting and Professor at College of the Atlantic
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 Gray Cox and I live in Bar Harbor. I am here to add to testimony in support of LD 2007.

In explaining Governor Mills’ opposition to this bill, her spokesperson, Scott Ogden, was quoted in this Saturday’s Bangor Daily News offering the same reasoning I have heard when I have pushed Governor Mills on the phone and in public meetings to explain her opposition to similar bills in the past. She fears the bill has “problematic provisions” that would lead to legal issues and significant jurisdictional changes while “making it nearly impossible for Maine people and businesses to determine what laws apply where and under what circumstances”.

Those legal issues have been very successfully solved by the members of the 570 tribes across the country in collaboration with the citizens and legislatures in the states where they live. As a result, those tribes have benefited dramatically in economic growth and have also benefited their neighbors significantly. Furthermore, the citizens and legislatures of those states have also acknowledged and respected the self-determination of those tribes in systematic ways.

Governor Mills’ assumption that Maine citizens and legislators lack the intelligence and capacity to do what others throughout the rest of this country have already done is both false and, frankly, insulting. While I have great respect for much else that the Governor has done, on this issue I do not think that she realizes the clear implications of the reasons she offers for opposing this bill. Her suggestion that Mainers won’t be able to deal with legal nuances that have already been dealt with effectively in dozens of other states is an insult to the intelligence and competence of your constituents and each of you as legislators. I would urge you to staunchly defy this kind of insult, insist on passage of LD 2007, and vote to over-ride any veto of it the Governor might attempt.

It is time that Maine join the rest of our nation in benefiting from the Federal policies and fundings that have helped increase other tribes’ incomes by 61% compared to Maine Wabanaki’s increase of a mere 9%. It is time to honor our Wabanaki Tribes with the same rights and dignities as other tribes across the country have achieved in self-determination. And it is time to stop allowing our Governor to insult the legal competence of our citizens and legislators.

Thank you for this opportunity to share my views and urge you on efforts to advance the prosperity and dignity of the peoples of Maine!