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State Judiciary Committee Members

RE: LD2007

Dear Judiciary Committee members,

I am writing to express my strong support for the passage of LD2007, a bill to acknowledge and restore the inherent right of the Wabanaki Nations in Maine to self-govern within their respective territories in accordance with the same federal laws that govern tribal lands elsewhere in the United States.

I am a healthcare provider who has moved back to Maine and reside in Old Town. I have been following attempts to pass similar legislation over the past several years and am horrified that we are here again in 2024. As the Committee knows, federal Indian laws and the programs they support are blocked by the Settlement Act in Maine if they “affect or preempt” Maine law. This situation has been actively harming Wabanaki communities since the passage of the Act and is a continuation of historical wrongs done to them for over 400 years.

Since 1980, Congress has enacted more than 150 federal laws for the benefit of tribal nations, and Maine has fought to block access to many of them. Without the access to policies, programs, and funding that build and support self-governance, economic growth in the Wabanaki Nations and their surrounding rural communities are severely impacted. This keeps not only Tribal members but everyone in surrounding, economically hardest hit areas of Maine, in poverty. Compared to tribes outside of Maine, all four Wabanaki Nations lag severely in economic development. Between 1989 and 2018, income in Maine grew 25%, while income growth for Wabanaki citizens was just 9%. In 2021, the average income for Mainers overall was more than twice as high as that of Wabanaki citizens. Compared to the rest of Maine, the Wabanaki child poverty rate is almost four times higher. These are not just statistics- they have lifelong harmful effects on peoples’ lives, lower their life expectancy, and ruin their quality of life. It is shocking that the Mills Administration, which has benefited so much from federal funds to promote public health and health equity for Maine residents, continues to block access to life-saving federal programs for Wabanaki communities.

This shameful situation cannot be allowed to continue. I urge the Judiciary Committee to move LD2007 forward for full consideration, and the Maine legislature to pass it over the Governor’s veto if necessary. We are all connected, and injustice and lack of self-determination for one group of people harms everyone. The well-being of our communities are intertwined and there is much healing to be done to allow us to work in partnership and develop an environmentally sustainable, health-promoting future for our children. We need all the help we can get! Acknowledging the sovereignty of Wabanaki nations and

ending State opposition to accessing critical federal funding is an essential first step which will improve the lives of all communities here.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Daisy Goodman', followed by a long horizontal line that ends in an arrowhead pointing to the right.

Daisy Goodman
Old Town

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Old Town, ME
LD 2007

Please see attached testimony in support of LD2007. Thank you.