

February 26, 2024

Testimony on **LD 2007 – *An Act to Advance Self-determination for Wabanaki Nations***

Greetings Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and other members of the Committee on Judiciary, Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments in support of LD 2007. My name is Chris McLaughlin, and I am humbled to be the Executive Director of the Maine Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW ME). On behalf of our over 1000 members here in Maine, I'm honored to share thoughts on this important piece of proposed legislation. I also am a licensed clinical social worker with almost 25 years of experience providing and leading behavioral health services across a variety of treatment settings here in Maine.

LD 2007: *An Act to Advance Self-Determination for Wabanaki Nations*, sponsored by Speaker Rachel Talbot Ross, is just that bill. This bill will make substantial changes to the 1980 Settlements Acts based on many of the consensus recommendations (<https://legislature.maine.gov/doc/3815>) from the bipartisan Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act. LD 2007 would address problems with the law that prevent the Passamaquoddy Tribe, the Penobscot Nation, the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians and the Mi'kmaq Nation from exercising their inherent right to self-govern, as all other federally recognized tribes in the United States are able to do under Federal Indian Law.

As social workers, we believe in racial equity and social justice which means both listening and action. It also means doing the critical introspective work to deepen our understanding of how our profession of social work has caused harm to the Wabanaki. We are working to center acknowledging the true history since first contact, teach this history of harms, and deepen our knowledge and engagement in culturally sensitive, anti-oppressive approaches when in relationship with the Tribes. A big part of our work is to take action with humility when invited by the Wabanaki Nations. The Wabanaki Nations have invited their settler neighbors to join with them to support their inherent sovereignty. To truly center our relationship work with the Wabanaki Nations, we know we must work to change policy and systems for equity and respect of the Wabanaki people and the health of our state. Supporting this legislation is a critical way to work toward being in a respectful and right relationship with the Wabanaki.

On behalf of the Maine Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, we urge you to vote in favor of LD 2007!

Thank you for your time and consideration,



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