

Michelle Cook
Falmouth
LD 2007

Dear Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary, my name is Michelle Cook and I live in Falmouth. I am a veterinarian, public health professional, mother, outdoor enthusiast, and a citizen deeply interested in restoring tribal self-governance. I am writing in support of LD 2007.

I am disturbed by the restrictions imposed by the 1980 Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act (MICSA). 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 has been severely stunted. Compared to tribes outside of Maine, all four Wabanaki Nations lag severely in economic development. Enabling the Wabanaki Nations to take full advantage of federal self-determination policies will benefit local tribes and Maine overall. The environmental protection and economic opportunities that will result from tribal self-determination will positively impact children and the future of the place we call Maine.

LD2007 will restore the rights and authority of all four Wabanaki Nations to govern tribal court jurisdiction; hunting, fishing and natural resource regulation on tribal land; taxation authority; and trust land acquisition. This is in alignment with the rights other 570 federally recognized tribes in the United States and will support economic growth, environmental protection, and be a first step in restoring justice for the Wabanaki Nations.

Thank you for your consideration of my testimony.