

Marita Kennedy-Castro
Portland
LD 2007

Sen. Carney, Rep. Moonen and members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Marita Kennedy-Castro and I live in Portland, ME.

I am testifying on behalf of Embody the Rhythm, and I am writing to testify in support of LD 2007, a bill to restore the Wabanaki Nations inherent right to self-determination.

Restoring access to what has been lost or taken away, is one way that we as human beings restore right relationships and create benefits to all. While the 570 other tribal nations across the established USA have been given access to the federal policies of self-determination, the settler State of Maine withholding these same benefits from the Indigenous Wabanaki population here, has had a devastating effect. The restrictions imposed by the 1980 Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act (MICSA), have resulted in the poverty rate of Wabanaki youth being some of the highest in the nation, according to the Harvard Report. As a non-Indigenous resident who grew up poor in rural Maine myself, it is deeply disconcerting to see any of our human relatives struggling in poverty, and all of the negative ramifications that follow suit.

It is significant to look at the benefit to all Maine residents that would come from passing LD 2007. The research represented in the Harvard Report also concludes that self-government for the tribes would likely mean "an additional \$330 million a year in Maine's Gross Domestic Product, more than 2,700 jobs, and \$39 million a year in state and local tax revenue". Based on the experience of other tribal nations, more than half of the new jobs created are likely to be filled by neighbors of Wabanaki tribes in rural Maine.

Imagine the benefit to our future generations when relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous are supported through mutual and shared advancement. The arguments to uphold the Settlement Act (MICSA) and prevent the Wabanaki from self-determination have been based in fear and a lack of vision. There is sound evidence to demonstrate that by embracing a culture of trust and camaraderie with our Indigenous relatives and restoring their right to self-govern, we will all benefit.

I also want to acknowledge the great reputation that the State of Maine holds in regards to our environmental stewardship, leading the nation with some of our environmental policies. This truth is in large part thanks to the generations of Wabanaki land stewards that came before settler arrival, and whose descendants have continued to teach and provide leadership in the charge for clean air, water and land throughout the state, for generations. Passing LD 2007 and restoring Wabanaki self-government will be a great advancement in the right direction for us all.

Thank you committee members for receiving my testimony. I am anticipating the benefits that will be celebrated by Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples alike, when LD 2007 is passed.

In community,
Marita Kennedy-Castro