

Clara Porter
Portland
LD 2007

To: Sen. Carney, Rep. Moonen, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on
Judiciary

From: Clara Porter, Portland, Maine
Director, Prevention. Action. Change.

Re: Support for LD 2007, An Act to Advance Self-determination for Wabanaki
Nations

Sen. Carney, Rep. Moonen and members of the Judiciary Committee, I am writing to
express my strong support for LD 2007.

When I was 50, I visited the lands of the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians on a
grantee trip with the Maine Women's Fund. Something I learned that day has stayed
with me and become a personal driving force. The life expectancy for the Maliseet,
was and remains, 55 years. Fifty Five. I knew then that whatever time I had after
reaching 55 was stolen time and that I should use it to make positive change where
and how I could.

The State of Maine has that chance in the form of LD 2007, a bill that would finally
bring full tribal sovereignty to the Passaquoddy Tribe, the Penobscot Nation, the
Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians, and the Mi'kmaq Nation. The Settlement Acts did
not resolve disputes between the state and the tribes but rather deepened divides and
resulted in even greater economic disparity in these communities.

Since the Settlement Acts passed, only one federal law, the Violence Against Women
Act, has been successfully extended to the Wabanaki, and then fully 17 years after
provisions to protect Indigenous women were included. It is with the funding
provided by this law that my organization, Prevention. Action. Change. has been
engaged with tribal communities. In collaboration with the Wabanaki Women's
Coalition, we have been traveling to all 5 indigenous communities, teaching
empowerment self defense to women and youth impacted by sexual and intimate
partner violence. Our goal is to build a cohort of teachers in these communities who
can make this proven approach to preventing, interrupting, responding to, and healing
from violence and make it their own.

LD 2007 is a consensus bill, supported by over 100 lawmakers from all parties and
based upon the recommendations of the bi-partisan commission called for by
Governor Mills in 2020. The tribes have acted in good faith, and it is now on the state
to do so as well. The Passaquoddy Tribe, the Penobscot Nation, the Houlton Band of
Maliseet Indians, and the Mi'kmaq Nation have been kept from true sovereignty for
far too long. LD 2007 is an important step towards righting that wrong and finally
giving the tribes access to the rights and funds they have been long denied.

Thank you,

Clara Porter, Director
Prevention. Action. Change.