

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

From: Allyson Gardner, Fryeburg ME, 04037

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

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

My name is Alyson Gardner and I am a resident of Fryeburg. I am writing to urge you to support the passing of LD 2007. We need to ensure that the tribes here in Maine are treated in the same manner as the other 570+ federally recognized tribes across our nation. By allowing this double standard, we do harm to the tribal communities across our state.

I have worked with young people from these communities and have seen the disappointment and disadvantages that they face. From marginalized communities and racial discrimination within their schools, these youth face the backlash of years of decision-making that put their futures at risk. Tribes in Maine have not benefited from more than 150 federal laws passed since 1980. That is an incredible amount of lost funding and support for families across our state. LD 2007 can fix this issue. This legislation implements 22 consensus recommendations released in January 2020 by the Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act. We must support the work and findings of this task force by passing LD 2007.

For a millennium, the tribes in Maine have been excellent stewards of the land, natural resources, and community. By denying their access to be recognized federally, we fail to honor this history, and we discredit their culture and importance to our state. We see the long-reaching wisdom and persistence that the Wabanaki's people set has developed into Restorative Practices and Justice work that is making our schools safer and stronger. Their knowledge is supporting youth across Maine. It is long overdue that we support their sovereignty.

I know we cannot change the past decisions of our ancestors, but we can ensure that the next generations view our work as part of the solution and not a continuation of suppression and injustice.

The time is now to stand by our tribal neighbors. When they prosper, Maine prospers.

Sincerely, Allyson Gardner

Thank you for the work you do,

Allyson Gardner