

Testimony in Support of LD 2007, An Act to Advance Self-determination for Wabanaki Nations

Dear Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Mareisa Weil, I live in Freedom, and I am submitting testimony today in support of LD 2007, An Act to Advance Self-determination for Wabanaki Nations.

The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr famously wrote in his Letter from Birmingham Jail that “justice too long delayed is justice denied.” For more than 40 years Wabanaki nations have been trying to get out from under the weight of a bad deal – the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act. The State has taken a paternalistic stance, that we can’t do this and we can’t do that, because of the implications for governance, for land use, etc, etc. The State has asked Wabanaki Nations to be patient, to be flexible, to accept incremental changes on the State’s timeline. I say no. I say give the tribes what they are asking for and more.

Wabanaki people have a relationship to the land that we live on that predates our (white European descendents) settlement and occupancy by thousands of years. In the few hundred years that we have been ‘in control,’ we have made a mess of the environment. Don’t you ever pause to imagine what might have happened if we had embraced and adopted Indigenous culture and practice, instead of imposing ours on theirs at great violent lengths? To think of the rivers and hills as relatives, rather than our dominion?

Self-determination and sovereignty for Wabanaki people benefits all of us. It is a crucial step towards repair for the centuries of harm that we inflicted on Indigenous people. We cannot let the State’s concerns over municipal governance, land use, potential litigation, etc, stand in the way of doing what is right. We must take every opportunity to stand with Wabanaki, and I urge you, from the bottom of my heart, from the depths of my soul, to hear our cries and do what is right. I will close with another quote from the Rev. Dr. King: The time is always right to do what is right. Please vote Ought to Pass on LD 2007.

Thank you.