

Michelle DeBlois  
Greene  
LD 2007

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

From: Michelle DeBlois, Greene, ME 04236 CEO & Founder of ReMo

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

Dear Sen. Carney, Rep. Moonen and members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Michelle DeBlois and I live in and work in Androscoggin County and I am the founder and CEO of ReMo, an educational technology company focused on empowering teachers and students around reading. I am here to testify in support of LD 2007.

There are many reasons that I support LD 2007. The first reason is that through easing the Settlement Act's restrictions it will enable the Wabanaki Nations to take full advantage of federal self-determination policies that are very clearly benefiting 570 other tribes and nearby communities across the country. The average income growth since 1989 has been 61% for tribal citizens not located in Maine, but only 9% for Wabanaki citizens in Maine. Because of the Settlement Act, the Wabanaki tribes' health, educational and economic outcomes have lagged far behind those of other population groups in Maine and other tribes throughout the country. For Maine to thrive we need everyone living in Maine to also thrive.

The second reason for the children. According to the U.S. Census data in 2019, childhood poverty rates within Wabanaki communities range from a low of 40% at the Passamaquoddy Tribe at Motahkomikuk community to a high of 77% for the Mi'kmaq Nation in Aroostook County. By comparison, Maine's childhood poverty rate for the same period is 15%. Every child should have the opportunity to thrive in Maine.

The third reason is economic growth for everyone in Maine. By modernizing MICSA, Harvard researchers say the Wabanaki Nations could become the economic engines of their regions, creating new opportunities for jobs and income growth for themselves and rural Maine. According to the recent Harvard Report, 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 tribes, better than half the new jobs created are likely to be filled by neighbors of Wabanaki tribes in rural Maine. Everyone in Maine will benefit from this new economic opportunity.

In conclusion, thank you Sen. Carney, Rep. Moonen, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary for time and your support of LD 2007 to remove the barriers that have kept the Wabanaki, along with their neighbors in rural Maine, from achieving the dramatic and sustained economic growth achieved over the past 40 years by 570 federal tribes across Indian Country. It's time to begin a new era of partnership with the Wabanaki Nations for the betterment of everyone in Maine.