

Dear Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary:

My name is Kimberly Simmons. I am submitting testimony from home in Portland Maine, a home built on land that once belonged to the Wabanaki people.

I write in strong support of LD 2007, An Act to Advance Self-determination for Wabanaki Nations.

I support this bill for dozens of reasons, reasons I've come to learn slowly and as an adult, as I was not provided any accurate history of Indigenous people when I grew up in Lewiston, in the 1970s and 1980s. I went to school at a time when stereotypical images of "cowboys and Indians" were taken for granted, and even my family's strong commitment to civil rights left out an analysis of colonization.

Only in relatively recent years have I really been asked to consider the particular ways that people with Indigenous heritage have been treated by Maine, as a State. The truth and Reconciliation work was groundbreaking. The generous teaching by Maine's Wabanaki REACH program expanded my understanding, heart and mind. Each new level of raised awareness helps me prepare myself to learn more, to grapple with what a genuine path of reparations might include, and to practice humility as we try to imagine a future that includes all of us.

The threat of climate crisis shapes all of our lives now. We are increasingly recognizing that we live out of sync with the values and practices and knowledges needed to sustain life on our shared planet. Many of us have a deep respect for the wisdom and core values of Indigenous culture, yet also recognize that all of us have been cut off from the transmission of important cultural knowledge because of the interventions of time, technology, and the values of Western settlers. We have a debt to pay for any opportunity to salvage historical wisdom and be allowed to share in the teachings of those with practice living closer to the land and to natural cycles and to a belief in the possibility of sharing. We need to make time and space, and provide adequate resources, for this wisdom to be surfaced and shared in the communities that have been marginalized and often brutally cut off from their own heritage, before asking for the resources to be shared with the groups that most created the crises to begin with.

Reparations can and will take many forms, some deeply personal and some political. Our only collective way forward is to grapple with the incompleteness of apologies and to find rituals for healing, including the redistribution of resources. None of *this* work is

possible without first affirming the core human rights and liberation of Maine's Tribal populations.

LD 2007 is both symbolic and material. I am certain others have done a better job laying out the specific reasons to pass it with overwhelming majorities. If the Governor's office remains entrenched in their position - they are also in a place of learning on the continuum we are all traversing - we can still move forward as a State. This will require unity as Legislature. You serve as a reflection of the people, and I deeply believe the people of Maine want the sovereignty of Maine's Tribes to be respected, as we all want acknowledgement of our fundamental liberty.

Creating new futures is messy, but so is maintaining the status quo. We will not be able to tackle the wide range of increasingly scary problems in our communities without first building a core trust in our Governments and capacity to work with respect for all of us. Move beyond land acknowledgements! Pass LD 2007!

Thank you,

Kim

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