

February 26, 2024

Joint Committee on Judiciary
5 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

RE: 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 Jake Roche of Berwick, Maine, Northeast Campaign Manager for the Climate and Energy Program in the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS). UCS is the nation's leading science based non-profit organization with more than a half a million supporters, including more than 2,500 in Maine. On behalf of UCS, I offer this testimony in support of LD 2007.

Communities of color, low-income communities, and tribal communities across Maine are disproportionately affected by problems such as climate change, environmental pollution, and lack of access to healthy food. Because science has too often ignored or exacerbated these racial inequities, it must now be used to right those wrongs.

The Union of Concerned Scientists calls for social and environmental justice to ensure that government policies are not only based on the best available science, but also designed to benefit those who need them the most.

The Maine State Legislature should recognize tribal sovereignty and allow the Indigenous tribes in Maine to continue their thoughtful and progressive stewardship of their lands. Through self-determination and tribal self-government, the Wabanaki Nations will continue to protect the environment and can become the economic engines of rural Maine, contributing an additional \$330 million/year to the state's GDP and creating more than 2,700 jobs.

For forty years, Maine has moved in the opposite direction from that of federal support for Indigenous self-determination. The need for sovereignty for the tribes in Maine is immediate and clear. The tribes are asking for the same rights and self-determination as the other 570 federally recognized tribes in the US.

LD 2007 will protect Wabanaki rights by restoring tribal self-government. The legislation addresses long-standing issues with a land claims act passed in 1980 that governs the relationship between the state and the tribes in Maine. Wabanaki sovereignty and self-determination are necessary to confront the systemic and cultural racism that has been perpetrated through Maine law as well as in the name of science.

We appreciate your attention to LD 2007 and to the important opportunity it represents to ensure that the Wabanaki Nations can take full advantage of the federal self-determination policies and the clear social, economic, and environmental benefits that come with them.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on LD 2007.

Sincerely,

Jake Roche
Northeast Campaign Manager
Climate & Energy Program
Union of Concerned Scientists