

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

To: Sen. Carney, Rep. Moonen, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary
From: Jean Berman, 6 Tolman Rd, Peaks Island, Maine 04108

Dear Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Jean Berman and I live on Peaks Island. I work coordinating volunteers for a hospice and volunteer at the local school and at a retirement home. I am an Interfaith Chaplain, rooted in Judaism. For most of my 70 years, I have been actively enjoying the outdoors, mostly hiking, kayaking, and camping, and a supporter of equal rights for all people. I am writing to testify in support of LD 2007.

From early childhood I was taught that all people should have equal rights, and as a young adult I learned that I can be someone who looks for the best in others, inviting and supporting that expression. I believe that everyone has something to offer, especially, in this case, the Wabanaki people who have, as I understand, stewarded the land they lived on and the natural resources in ways we could learn from. There is a movement in conservation to include the indigenous peoples and their wisdom, which is already making a difference in areas around the world.

I also believe that what truly benefits individuals and their communities benefits the whole of society. My Jewish ancestors were kept from full representation and participation in the Eastern European countries they came from and were violently oppressed by those in power. Coming to the United States, they arrived poor but desirous of making lives for themselves and contributing to society. They succeeded, but not without discriminatory practices of the time, which kept them again for full participation. (Although not relevant to this, it is shameful to me how those in power in Israel oppress and now kill Palestinians. We should know better.)

I cannot say it better than in materials sent to me on this issue, that “Due to restrictions imposed by the *1980 Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act (MICSA)*, the Wabanaki Nations have been kept from achieving the significant economic growth experienced by the other 570 federal tribes over the past 40 years who’ve had full access to federal policies of self-determination. Removing those obstacles would help the Wabanaki Nations take advantage of federal self-determination policies, programs and funding that elsewhere in Indian Country led to the creation of thousands of jobs and hundreds of millions of dollars in goods and services produced by Native businesses.”

By “advancing self-determinations for Wabanaki nations”, we can right some of the wrongs of oppression of the past, giving them opportunities to advance, to all our benefit. Thank you for your attention to my testimony and this issue. **I implore you to do the right thing and pass LD 2007, *An Act to Advance Self-determination for Wabanaki Nations*.**

Sincerely,
Jean Berman
2.26.2024