

Sen. Carney, Rep. Moonen, and the distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee

Good morning, my name is Kevin Craig, and I live in Waterville, Maine. I work with Maine Youth Power, and I am here today in support of LD 2007 - An Act to Advance Self-determination for Wabanaki Nations.

For nearly 40 years, the Wabanaki have been denied rights exercised by other federally recognized tribes through the Maine Indian Land Claims settlement. LD 2007 represents taking action on bipartisan findings from the 2020 task force investigating the Maine Settlement Acts. This action isn't just overdue, but would represent a substantial improvement in the agency of the Wabanaki in addition to providing additional economic gain to Mainers.

According to a 2022 report by the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development, Wabanaki self-government 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. With much of these gains likely concentrated in rural areas, Wabanaki self-governance is not just essential to repairing the relationship between the Wabanaki and the state, but moving both the Wabanaki and Mainers forward with economic development.

As a student in Maine, I've seen how special of a place Maine is and how I appreciate the way life should be. As much as I celebrate Maine's uniqueness, Maine's unique oversight of the Wabanaki needs to be revised so that Mainers and Wabanaki alike can work collaboratively more effectively.

Thank you for your time.

Kevin Craig