

Chair Carney, Chair Moonen, and distinguished members of the Joint Committee on the Judiciary.

I am writing today in support of LD 2007, An Act to Advance Self-determination for Wabanaki Nations.

I am an independent historian who has, among other things, served as a co-curator for a Maine Historical Society (MHS) exhibit entitled “Begin Again: Reckoning with Intolerance in Maine,” which was open to the public in 2021. This testimony is offered on my own behalf, I don’t speak for MHS. My role was to represent the history of women’s rights, but of my fellow co-curators was Darren Ranco, a citizen of the Penobscot Nation and Chair of Native American Programs, Associate Professor of Anthropology, Coordinator of Native American Research, University of Maine.

From Dr. Ranco, and as part of my broader research in support of the exhibit, I learned how Wabanaki rights were violated beginning with the earliest efforts by Europeans to colonize the Americas, and they have continued to this day. While progress has been made, the Wabanaki still lack fundamental rights that are available to Native Americans in other states because of Maine’s unique history of being part of Massachusetts, and the limitations created by the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act.

I support LD 2007 because, fundamentally, it’s the right thing to do, for the Wabanaki and for Maine. Greater self-government will bring the Wabanaki more control over their affairs and greater prosperity for the tribes and for the areas of Maine where they have tribal land. This will benefit everyone.

Will tribal sovereignty present challenges as we move forward in this new relationship? Yes, I believe it will. However, I believe they are solvable and, that any such challenges pale in comparison to the historic wrongs perpetrated on the Wabanaki people.

I ask you to vote in favor of LD 2007, An Act to Advance Self-determination for Wabanaki Nations.