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Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

RE: LD 2007 - An Act to Advance Self-determination for Wabanaki Nations

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary, my name is Kaitlyn Nuzzo and I am the Government Relations Director for The Nature Conservancy in Maine. **I appreciate this opportunity to testify in support of LD 2007, An Act to Advance Self-determination for Wabanaki Nations.**

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is a nonprofit conservation organization dedicated to conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends. TNC has been leading conservation in Maine for more than 60 years and is the 12th largest landowner in the state, owning and managing roughly 300,000 acres. We are also part of a global organization active in all 50 states and across the world in over 70 countries. TNC recognizes that Indigenous Peoples are some of the most important partners in the global effort to contain climate change and preserve biodiversity.

Too often when it comes to decisions that affect their lands, waters, and livelihoods, Indigenous Peoples have been denied the opportunity to participate in meaningful ways. This results in the exclusion of important rights-holders from decision-making processes, and in management approaches that do not consider the lessons and solutions offered by Indigenous Ecological Knowledge. TNC believes that one of the most effective and enduring actions we can take is to strengthen the voice, choice, and action of Indigenous People, especially in natural resource stewardship.

Here in Maine, we continue to learn about the historical and ongoing injustices faced by the Wabanaki Tribes. We acknowledge the urgency of addressing these injustices, and we value the work of the Maine Indian Land Claims Settlement Task Force in developing a package of recommendations aimed at doing so. LD 2007 represents an important step toward recognizing the inherent rights to self-determination and sovereignty of the Wabanaki Tribes.

Our support for LD 2007 is guided by what we have learned from Wabanaki people through partnerships and collaborative projects. TNC has committed to work with and in support of the Wabanaki Tribes. This work is deeply rooted in our global organization's understanding that Indigenous self-determination is the foundation for lasting, quality conservation outcomes. We urge this committee and the Maine Legislature to support LD 2007.