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Greene
LD 2007

I wish to provide this testimony in support of LD 2007 - An Act to Advance Self-determination for Wabanaki Nations.

It is long overdue that the State of Maine make good on promises to the Wabanaki Nations, the longtime stewards of this land we all call "home."

The right to self-govern is a cornerstone of any sovereign nation and is held by all federally recognized tribes. However, the Settlement Acts prevent the tribes in Maine from exercising this right as the vast majority of tribes elsewhere in the United States do.

Easing the Settlement Act's restrictions will enable the Wabanaki Nations to take full advantage of federal self-determination policies that are very clearly benefiting 570 other tribes and nearby communities across the country. The average income growth since 1989 has been 61% for tribal citizens not located in Maine, but only 9% for Wabanaki citizens in Maine; Maine's overall income growth for the same period was 25%. Likewise, because of the Settlement Act, the Wabanaki tribes' health, educational and economic outcomes have lagged far behind those of other population groups in Maine and other tribes throughout the country.

By modernizing MICSA, Harvard researchers say the Wabanaki Nations could become the economic engines of their regions, creating new opportunities for jobs and income growth for themselves and rural Maine. According to the recent Harvard Report, self-government for the tribes would likely mean an additional \$330 million a year in Maine's Gross Domestic Product, \$39 million a year in state and local tax revenue, and more than 2,700 jobs – 85% of which would be gained by the tribes' neighbors in rural Maine. Based on the experience of other tribes, better than half the new jobs created are likely to be filled by neighbors of Wabanaki tribes in rural Maine.

The politicians who drafted the 1980 Settlement Act called it a "living document" that should not be set in stone as it has been for more than 40 years to the detriment of the Wabanaki and rural Maine communities and the state of Maine. Bottom line: MICSA provides for the State of Maine, Passamaquoddy Tribe and Penobscot Nation to amend the law within broad areas. It's time to modernize this broken deal and begin a new era of partnership with the Wabanaki Nations for the betterment of everyone in Maine.

The Wabanaki have been protecting the environment and maintaining sustainable ecological practices for millennia, long before European settlement of Maine. They will continue to do so; it's their heritage and birthright as Wabanaki peoples.

It's time to remove the barriers that have kept the Wabanaki, along with their neighbors in rural Maine, from achieving the dramatic and sustained economic growth achieved over the past 40 years by 570 federal tribes across Indian Country.

I respectfully implore you to pass LD 2007 without further delay.