

**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: Katie Draeger, 58 Smith Union, Bowdoin College, Bowdoin College Sunrise Movement

Dear Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Katie and I live in Brunswick. I am a senior college student at Bowdoin and I am one of the leaders of our campus climate justice movement, a space which we often use to advocate effective and necessary Wabanaki tribal rights legislation. I am writing to testify in support of LD 2007.

Two years ago, I wrote an op-ed for the Lewiston Sun Journal (<https://www.sunjournal.com/2022/05/15/katie-draeger-gov-mills-resistance-to-ld-1626-is-a-perpetuation-of-maines-disgraceful-history-with-tribal-sovereignty/>) and later co-hosted a letter-writing with Bowdoin's Native American Student Association in support of L.D. 1626, an act which would have provided the Wabanaki people with greater jurisdiction over their legal and governance systems. In particular, L.D. 1626 would have rolled back many of the restrictions imposed on the Wabanaki people by the 1980 Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act (MICSA), which has restricted economic growth for Maine's tribes and their self-governance to a greater extent than the 570 other federally-recognized tribes across the nation. Despite broad, bipartisan support for this previous bill (passed 81-55 in the House, and was voted "ought to pass" in the Senate), the Governor threatened to veto the bill multiple times and the bill was never implemented. A similar bill went through the same route last year (passed house and senate), but the Governor vetoed the bill again. This L.D. 2007 bill, carefully responding to the critiques from legislators in previous years, is the key opportunity to reduce the restrictions on Maine tribes from the Settlement Acts, and catch Maine up with the rest of the nation in terms of tribes' sovereignty.

Not only is L.D. 2007 essential for supporting Wabanaki folks' rights and economic wellbeing, but the bill also supports Maine's rural communities overall. According to a Harvard report (<https://www.wabanakialliance.com/harvardreport/>), self-government for the tribes would likely mean an additional \$330 million a year in Maine's Gross Domestic Product, more than 2,700 jobs (including those for neighbors of rural Wabanaki tribes), and \$39 million a year in state and local tax revenue. It is essential to implement this legislation on the primary grounds of repairing Maine's relationship to the Wabanaki tribes, but it is also clear to positively impact the state overall.

It is an honor to contribute my voice to this cohesive, compassionate, and deeply intersectional movement for tribal sovereignty in Maine. It is imperative that Maine begin mending its relationship to the Wabanaki people, beginning with catching up their sovereignty rights with the rest of the nation. L.D. 2007 is an incredible leap towards a hopeful future for all who currently live on this land. Thank you so much for your time today and I am wishing you all a safe and happy transition into spring.

Sincerely,  
Katie Draeger