

Dear Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Terence Miller and I am the Advocacy Director at Preble Street. I am writing to testify in support of LD 2007: *An Act to Advance Self-Determination for Wabanaki Nations*. At Preble Street, our mission is to provide accessible barrier-free services to empower people experiencing problems with homelessness, housing, hunger, and poverty, and to advocate for solutions to these problems. The core of this mission is compassion, community, and **equity**. Support for the Wabanaki nations and the furthering of Wabanaki sovereignty is inherent to the pursuit of equity in the State of Maine.

At Preble Street our clients and community are facing the ongoing challenges caused by housing instability, food insecurity, and deep poverty, all of which are issues that Wabanaki communities across Maine know well. LD 2004 seeks to address the ongoing harm done by the 1980 Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act, an act that has prevented the Wabanaki nations from accessing the same federal self-determination policies awarded to the 570 other federally recognized tribes in the nation. These self-determination policies have allowed for growth and stability in other tribes nationwide, and lack of access to them has limited to Wabanaki nations' ability for advancement and growth, particularly economic growth. Economic growth in other federally recognized tribes far surpasses that of the Wabanaki nations during the same time period, leading the Wabanaki nations to experience higher rates of housing and food insecurity and child poverty, among other difficulties.

The State of Maine, which we are fortunate to call home, is land that has been stewarded, protected, and cared for by the Wabanaki nations for thousands of years. Despite ongoing colonial efforts to hinder Wabanaki sovereignty and stewardship efforts, the Wabanaki nations continue to care for the land and each other. Throughout much of history, current history included, organizations, government entities, and various other groups in positions of power have made decisions "for the benefit" of Indigenous communities, attempting to strip these communities of their autonomy, sovereignty, and cultural identity. Indigenous communities have long resisted the actions of these organizations, and it is our responsibility to stand alongside them and follow their leadership.

Embedded in Preble Street's mission is the need for equity, stability, and safety for all individuals. As our founder, Joe Kreisler, once said "part of my job, part of being alive, is making sure that other people are too". The Wabanaki nations deserve not only to be alive, but to be alive and thriving.

On behalf of Preble Street, I ask that you please vote in favor of this bill.

Thank you.



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