

I am writing today in support of the passage of LD 2007/HP1287, An Act to Advance Self-determination for Wabanaki Nations. As I understand this bill, the purpose would be to establish that the Passamaquoddy Tribe, the Penobscot Nation, the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians and the Mi'kmaq Nation have the same rights to self-determination as other federally recognized Indian tribes within the United States. This bill would restore back to the tribes many of the rights, privileges, powers, duties and immunities enjoyed by other federally recognized Indian tribes within the United States, which were previously restricted by the Maine Implementing Act. This would be a significant change from the current law, which provides the State with significant authority over Indian affairs.

This bill is about equity and every individual in our country and in the State of Maine deserves equal rights under the law. I have identified as a lesbian for close to 50 years and I am well aware of how my personal rights and my rights withing my relationship with my (now) wife were compromised until the Supreme Court decision in 2015 recognizing marriage equality.

As you are all well aware, the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act was promulgated in 1980, 54 years ago. Times have changed and the Maine Legislature needs to acknowledge this and restore the rights and immunities to the indigenious nations that inhabit what we call Maine today.

Thank you for your consideration.

Susan Chase
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