

January 22, 2024



Greetings

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee.

My name is Jan Collins. I live in Wilton. I am assistant director of Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition. I'm here to testify in favor of L.D. 2007 An Act to Advance Self-determination for Wabanaki Nations.

MPAC's mission is to support Maine's incarcerated citizens, their families, and friends, in their struggle with Maine's criminal justice system. Our purpose is to reduce Maine's use of incarceration by creating a criminal justice system that is ethical, humane, and restorative in nature.

Both nationally and in Maine, members of indigenous peoples are incarcerated at higher rates than whites. This is a symptom of our treatment, not of their value.

The current lack of sovereignty of native peoples in Maine is also a reflection of our collective unwillingness to live by our stated values. We are guests in their homeland, not the other way around.

Thousands of years before Europeans appeared in the Western Hemisphere, native peoples governed themselves with great success. We have no more wisdom than they do.

As a country, it is our stated value that each nation is entitled to self-determination and autonomy. We are assisting the Ukrainians and Israelis for just that reason. It is unseemly to espouse that view in Europe and the Middle East and not practice it at home.

When Passamaquoddy, Penobscot, Mik'maq, and Maliseet are free to make their own governmental decisions, we will be that much freer as well.

I urge you to support LD 2007 An Act to Advance Self-determination for Wabanaki Nations.

Thank-you,
Jan Collins