

February 26, 2024  
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**Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary**

**RE: Support of LD 2007, An Act to Advance Self-Determination for Wabanaki Nations**

Dear Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary,

My name is Amara Ifeji, and I am the Director of Policy with the Maine Environmental Education Association (MEEA). Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of LD 2007, An Act to Advance Self-Determination for Wabanaki Nations, on behalf of the MEEA's 2000+ members and supporters.

For 40 years, the Maine Environmental Education Association has worked to enhance and amplify the efforts of individuals and organizations to build environmental awareness, appreciation, understanding, and action in Maine. We stand in solidarity with the Wabanaki peoples who have stewarded these lands for over 10,000 years and whose Traditional Ecological Knowledges continue to deepen, expand, and challenge the field of environmental education and beyond to approach education in a more holistic, nature-based, and interdisciplinary way.

Wabanaki people have approached stewardship with this interconnected framing for thousands of years. They have protected and safeguarded the environment of what is now Maine for the benefit of many generations. Their efforts are the reason Mainers are able to enjoy the beauty of the state's environment. All Mainers ought to have the deepest gratitude for the Wabanaki people for this reason and more.

For over 40 years, the Wabanaki tribes have been denied their inherent rights to regulate land use and natural resources on their land as they deem appropriate due to restrictions in the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act of 1980. The state of Maine has used this act to limit tribal self-determination in multiple ways, harming the tribes, putting the environment at risk, and leading to legal disputes. Moreover, none of the other 570 federally recognized tribes in the United States live under the same restrictions as the Wabanaki Nations.

The state can begin to set tribal-state relations right and fully recognize the inherent sovereignty of the Wabanaki Nations by passing LD 2007, An Act to Advance Self-Determination for Wabanaki Nations. To protect Maine's environment and environmental future by supporting justice, equity, and fairness for the tribes in Maine, I encourage you to support LD 2007.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "A. Ifeji", written in a cursive style.

Amara Ifeji

Director of Policy

Maine Environmental Education Association