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## **Testimony in Support of LD 2007**

*Act to Advance Self-determination for Wabanaki Nations*

**Dana Colihan, Co-Executive Director | February 26th, 2024**

Good Afternoon Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and Members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Dana Colihan, and I am Co-Executive Director of Slingshot, and we are a member of the Wabanaki Alliance. I am here to testify in strong support of LD 2007, an Act to Advance Self-determination for Wabanaki Nations.

Slingshot is an environmental justice organization, working alongside communities most impacted by environmental health threats to take aim at polluters and build community power. Whether your community is facing polluted water, a leaking landfill, or fracked-gas pipeline in your backyard, you deserve to know the facts, make your voice heard, and create the changes you want to see.

All over this country, Indigenous communities, communities of color, and low income communities experience the worst pollution, and the least access to environmental resources. The state of Maine has long followed this same pattern. At the state-owned Juniper Ridge Landfill, a private company discharges minimally treated PFAS-laden effluent into the Penobscot River, just a few miles from Indian Island. For thousands of years, the Penobscot and other tribes in Maine have stewarded this land. Now, these sacred waters are contaminated, posing a threat to the health and environment of everyone in Maine but especially to the Penobscot Nation, whose spiritual and cultural practices are directly impacted by this kind of pollution on sacred tribal lands.

Maine leads the nation in its regressive treatment of tribal nations. For the sake of our health and environment, we must respect tribal sovereignty and pass LD 2007. This is one step in righting our historical wrongs, restoring the rights of the Passamaquoddy Tribe, the Penobscot Nation, and the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians to regulate natural resources, fishing, and hunting on tribal land. The original stewards of this land are the best suited to care for it.

LD 2007 also reestablishes tribal sovereignty over critical issues including tribal court jurisdiction, taxation, and trust land acquisition.

It is long past time for Maine to respect tribal sovereignty. I urge the committee to listen to the Tribes and to pass LD 2007. Thank you.