

Michelle Violette
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LD 247

I am part "of a movement has been growing within this state to acknowledge Wabanaki connection to the land and to recognize the Wabanaki inherent right to self-determination to manage and steward these lands as the Wabanaki Nations have done for thousands of years."

LD 247, An Act Regarding Recommendations for Changing Place Names in the State "would create a process of land return and identification of co-management opportunities for State-owned lands and waterways to the Wabanaki. The bill proposes creation of the Commission to Review State-owned Lands and Waterways to identify which state-owned lands or waterways have sacred, traditional or other significance to the Passamaquoddy Tribe, Penobscot Nation, Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians or Mi'kmaq Nation and develop a process to return lands and waterways to the Passamaquoddy Tribe, Penobscot Nation, Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians and Mi'kmaq Nation.

The creation of the Commission to Review State-owned Lands and Waterways would create an opportunity for each individual Wabanaki Nation and the Wabanaki Nations collectively to identify the most significant lands to them. The benefits of creating a Commission as proposed by "LD 247, An Act Regarding Recommendations for Changing Place Names in the State "include identifying in advance lands and waterways of greatest importance to the Wabanaki, enhancing the process for transferring lands and waterways, introducing a more deliberate and intentional process than the current situation far too dependent on chance and circumstances, and building the working relationships and trust to implement land deals and creative management agreements.

The bill directs the Commission created by this bill to examine the practices of other states and the Federal Government to return lands and waterways to tribes in order to develop such a process in the State of Maine.

Concern has been expressed that the process of identifying lands and waterways especially important to the Wabanaki could make them vulnerable to unscrupulous individuals.

The provision of the bill allowing the Commission to "designate as confidential records pertaining to state-owned lands or waterways" should safeguard such areas and waters.

The legislation also empowers the Commission to make recommendations to the Legislature."

I agree with The Wabanaki Alliance testimony " the Commission also be directed to make recommendations to the executive branch of Maine State Government. The State of Maine agencies charged with overseeing natural resources and their management all exist within the executive branch of Maine State Government. Maine's chief executive enjoys many powers unique to that office and that office affords opportunities to promote return of land and expansion of co-management opportunities beyond specifically delineated powers that justifies recommendations when appropriate to the Governor of the State of Maine."

I urge the committee to vote to pass LD 247, An Act Regarding Recommendations for Changing Place Names in the State.

The quoted text is from the Testimony of John Dieffenbacher-Krall, Executive Director, Wabanaki Alliance, in Support of LD 1349 An Act to Review State Lands and Waterways That Have Sacred, Traditional or Other Significance to the Wabanaki People Before the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry,

Maine

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I reproduce it here because it best represents my beliefs and bears repeating.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

-Michelle Violette

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