

To: Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

From: April Fournier, 1241 Washington Ave, Portland ME 04103

Re: Opposition to LD 812 & 813, "An Act to Provide State Recognition of the Kineo St. John Tribe" and "An Act Regarding State Recognition of Native American Tribes"

Ya'at'eeh members of the Judiciary Committee, Ya'at'eeh shi k'ei doo shi' dine'e', Shí éí April yinishyé, Honágháahnii nishł́, Fournier báshishchíín, Ákót'éego diné asdzáán nishł́, T'ahdii kóq honiidlq, Ahéhee'

Good morning members of the Judiciary Committee and welcome my friends and relatives. My name is April Fournier, I am from my mother's clan Honágháahnii, I am from my fathers clan Fournier, In this way I am a Dine' woman. Thank you and I am grateful to have this opportunity to speak with you today in opposition of LD 812 and LD 813.

Tribal nations have a unique political status under U.S. law based on sovereignty, treaties and trust obligations. Tribal nations are inherently sovereign as we have existed on these lands prior to colonization. This is affirmed by both the United States Supreme Court and through international law cases. The U.S. government has worked and treated Tribes as sovereign nations even before the development of the Constitution. The Native American Rights Fund (NARF) writes that "treaties and international law establish a formal political relationship. Federal recognition is a legal and political acknowledgement of a Tribe's sovereignty."

The Wabanaki Nations have been engaged in a very public effort to repair the relationship the Nations have with the State of Maine, working to restore the recognition of that sovereignty and right to self-determination. The power to recognize and give this status is not and should not be in the hands of the state as they do not have the authority to designate who counts as a tribal nation. There is a process and criteria for how tribal nations receive federal recognition.

Indigenous Nations who have federal recognition are a political entity with unique status and access to laws, resources and benefits. They have a nation to nation relationship with the federal government. The introduction of a state process would undermine the work that has been done since before the formation of the U.S. government.

The process that is being contemplated in LD 813 would further undermine the Wabanaki Nations right to self-determination and status by establishing a committee appointed by someone holding a state office, the Governor, instead of being determined by tribal members and respecting again the nation to nation relationship currently recognized through the federal recognition process.

While I am Native, I am a guest here on the land of the Wabanaki Nations, but the fight for sovereignty and self-determination is one that I am familiar with and work every day to help

defend. This legislation would harm my Wabanaki relatives and set back all of the work they have been doing. I ask that you oppose LD 812 and 813 and continue to honor the nation to nation relationship, the political status and listen to the knowledge our Wabanaki Nations hold here on this land.

Ahe' hee' for your time and commitment to this work and our state.

April Fournier

She/Her

Dine'