

May 2, 2021

To: Senator Carney, Representative Harnett, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

From: Shirley Hager, 129 Chesterville Hill Road, Chesterville, ME 04938
Friends (Quaker) Committee on Maine Public Policy (FCMPP), and
Clerk, Committee on Tribal-State Relations of FCMPP

Re: **Support for LD 1626, An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act**

Senator Carney, Representative Harnett, and members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Shirley Hager and I am speaking on behalf of the Friends (Quaker) Committee on Maine Public Policy, Committee on Tribal-State Relations. One of our primary goals is right relationship between the State of Maine and our Wabanaki neighbors, and their fair and equitable treatment. **I am therefore testifying in support of LD 1626.**

We in Maine have before us a historic opportunity to right 40 years of wrongs done to Wabanaki tribal communities. The terms in the 1980 Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act and the Maine Implementing Act have proven disastrous for the tribes, and these bills are designed to address those wrongs.

Since 1980, Wabanaki tribes in Maine have been prevented from benefiting from over 150 federal laws designed to assist and support tribal health, safety, well-being, and self-determination. Wabanaki tribes here also contend with restrictions and complicated regulations imposed by the Implementing Act that are not experienced by the 570 federally-recognized tribes residing outside of Maine. **As a result, tribes in Maine suffer from disadvantages not found in any other state.** The vast majority of states where tribes are located abide by federal Indian law, which these bills propose. Through provisions and even requirements contained in federal Indian law, many of these states enjoy and celebrate productive relationships that benefit the tribes, the surrounding non-Native communities, and the state. Time and again, it has been shown that when the tribes are prosperous, surrounding rural communities are prosperous. This is our opportunity to create this reality for Wabanaki communities, for our rural areas, and for Maine as a whole.

The current situation imposed by the State of Maine on Wabanaki peoples is morally and ethically wrong. Because of the restrictive and onerous terms of the settlement acts, Maine was the subject of a 2013 United Nations investigation that described inequities as rising to the level of human rights violations. Tribal communities only want what tribes in other states enjoy—greater freedom to control their own destiny and to thrive. We have in LD 1626 the means to make this possible. Let's be able to say that this year Maine took this honorable and meaningful step toward greater prosperity for our Wabanaki neighbors, for rural communities and for our State. **FCMPP Committee on Tribal-State Relations strongly urges you to unanimously vote "ought to pass" on LD 1626.**

Thank you. shirley.hager@maine.edu; 207-491-0982