

Testimony of the Committee on Indian Relations of the Episcopal Diocese of Maine  
In Support of LD 1777 An Act to Create Economic Opportunity for Wabanaki Nations  
Through Internet Gaming  
Sponsored by Rep. Laura Supica

Sen. Hickman, Rep. Supica, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs; my name is Richard Farnsworth, I am a resident of Portland, and I am a member of the Legislative Committee of the Committee on Indian Relations of the Episcopal Diocese of Maine. On behalf of the Committee on Indian Relations, I ask you to vote Ought to Pass on LD 1777.

The Episcopal Committee on Indian Relations was formed by resolution of the Diocesan Convention in 1991. For over 30 years, we have lived into our mission "to deepen our relationship with the Wabanaki of Maine, to stand with the tribes in the pursuit of justice, to affirm their inherent sovereignty, and to support the preservation of Native languages and culture."

The annual Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Maine establishes policy for the Diocese. In 2022, the Convention adopted Resolution #5 "Tribal Sovereignty Includes Gaming," which provides clear support for legislation such as LD 1777 regarding implementation of tribal gaming. Resolution #5 affirms the Diocese's commitment to tribal sovereignty, recognizing that the tribes have the right to determine for themselves whether or not to pursue gaming as a means of economic development. Resolution #5 acknowledges that some among us have concerns about the possible negative impacts of gambling addiction, but it is clear that such concerns should not dictate to the tribes what policies they adopt as sovereign nations. Resolution #5 also notes that the wider Episcopal Church, at its 80<sup>th</sup> General Convention in July 2022, adopted a resolution recognizing the disproportionately high rates of poverty, incarceration, and unemployment among American Indian/Alaska Native communities nationally, and directing the Office of Government Relations (its Washington, DC office) "to advocate for legislation, funding and services which address the inequities in healthcare, housing, nutrition, and education affecting the quality of life of Native Peoples." Finally, Resolution #5 states that "The Episcopal Diocese of Maine supports Recommendation #17 of the Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act, which states 'Amend the Maine Implementing Act to render the federal Indian Gaming Regulatory Act applicable in Maine.'"

As a programmatic commission of the Episcopal Diocese of Maine, the Committee on Indian Relations urges the legislature to adopt legislation consistent with the Diocese's priority for tribal sovereignty and tribal economic development, including LD 1777. Thank you for your consideration of our testimony.