



Testimony before the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary  
**An Act to Advance Self-Determination for Wabanaki Nations**  
February 26, 2024

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen and Members of the Committee:

My name is Rev. Jane Field, and I am the Executive Director of the Maine Council of Churches, a coalition of seven mainline Protestant denominations who represent over 400 local churches in Maine with more than 50,000 parishioners in their care. I am testifying on behalf of the Council **in support of LD 2007**.

Our support reaffirms our deep respect for Maine's indigenous tribes and reaffirms our commitments: (1) to support their self-determination, (2) to address the legacy of harm faith communities inflicted on tribal peoples, and (3) to promote social justice, fairness, and equity. Toward those ends, we call on our legislature to advance the self-determination of Wabanaki Nations and thereby honor our State's responsibility to the tribes to interact with them on a mutually respectful and appropriate government-to-government basis. It is the necessary first step toward promoting harmony, reconciliation, and mutual understanding within and between our communities. It is a step that is long overdue.

It is also an essential step toward removing barriers that have prevented the Wabanaki Nations from achieving the significant economic growth experienced by tribes elsewhere in the United States who have had access to federal policies, access that can create thousands of jobs and millions of dollars' worth of goods and services produced by Native businesses; it would close the gap in income growth and improve health and education outcomes for the tribes; it would reduce the distressingly high childhood poverty rates in Wabanaki communities; and it would benefit not only the tribes, but all rural Mainers.

This moment in Maine history offers us the chance to do what is right--morally and economically, furthering justice, equity, and prosperity simultaneously.

Finally, this legislation offers us something people of faith believe in and practice: a chance to confess where we have gone wrong and amend our ways. The Settlement Act may have been the best we could do in 1980, but, as Maya Angelou was fond of saying, "When we know better, we do better." MICSA is flawed—rather than double-down in defensiveness, we must repair what is broken. We know better now. It is time to do better.

Let us not squander the extraordinary opportunity LD 2007 offers all of us. Vote Ought To Pass and lead us into a new and better era.