

The Honorable Raul Grijalva  
Chairman  
Committee on Natural Resources  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515  
[naomi.miguel@mail.house.gov](mailto:naomi.miguel@mail.house.gov)

The Honorable Bruce Westerman  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Natural Resources  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515  
[ken.degenfelder@mail.house.gov](mailto:ken.degenfelder@mail.house.gov)

RE: Support for H.R. 6707, *Advancing Equality for Wabanaki Nations Act*

Dear Chairman Grijalva and Ranking Member Westerman,

I have lived and worked in Orono, Maine since 2011. In recent years, I have been blessed with deep friendships with Indigenous people, including members of the nearby Penobscot Nation. My interest in tribal sovereignty is informed by these friendships, which have allowed me to learn, grow, and appreciate that support of H.R. 6707 is a pressing issue of equity and justice.

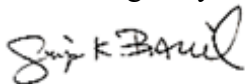
In my professional life, I serve as Director of the Wilson Center for Spiritual Exploration and Multifaith Dialogue at the University of Maine. The Wilson Center is an independent non-profit organization located in Orono. The mission of the Wilson Center is “to create progressive, ecumenical, and multifaith dialogue for the University of Maine community and through worship, study, and service, to work for social justice, honor diversity, and offer opportunities for spiritual growth.” As a community, our most central value is the equality of all people.

I view upholding the inherent sovereignty of my Wabanaki neighbors and ensuring their equal treatment through support of H.R. 6707 as a moral imperative. This crucial legislation undoes harm and inequity associated with the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act (MICSA) of 1980, and will materially improve the relationships between Wabanaki peoples and our state and national governments.

As a faith leader deeply committed to equity and justice, I mourn the decades Wabanaki peoples have spent struggling to regain their sovereign rights. I am reminded of a legal maxim popularized by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. that “justice too long delayed is justice denied.” I thank you for attending to this important legislation without delay.

In solidarity with the Indigenous people I hold dear, and eternal optimism for a just and equitable future, I urge you to vote in support of H.R. 6707.

Peace and blessings to you this day and always,



Dr. Sonja K. Birthisel  
Director of the Wilson Center

cc: Representative Jared Golden, [aaron.sege@mail.house.gov](mailto:aaron.sege@mail.house.gov)  
Representative Chellie Pingree, [evan.johnston@mail.house.gov](mailto:evan.johnston@mail.house.gov)