

The Rev. Dr. Myke Johnson
67 Birchwood Drive
Portland, ME 04102
April 8, 2022

The Honorable Raul Grijalva
Chairman
Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515
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

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

Dear Chairman Grijalva and Ranking Member Westerman,

Ntoliwis Myke Johnson. Nuceyaw Portland, Maine. Kat nil skicin, kenuk ntiywak skiciniweyik nitapiyik. To translate, “My name is Myke Johnson. I am from Portland, Maine. I am not Native, but I have Native friends.” For the last four years, I have been privileged to study the Passamaquoddy language at the University of Southern Maine. One thing I learned through that experience was the large number of Passamaquoddy, Penobscot, Wolastoqi/Maliseet, and Mi’kmaq people who live in our city. These are the four tribes of the Wabanaki confederacy. They have lived in what is now called Maine, for over 10,000 years.

While there are tribal reservation lands in other parts of the state, Wabanaki people often work and live in many other Maine communities as well. My friendships have helped me to see the challenges the tribes are facing, and motivated me to do whatever I can in support of solutions.

Currently, Wabanaki tribes in Maine are excluded from many beneficial federal laws that apply to other federally recognized tribes in the country. This means that the Wabanaki miss out on the benefits of federal laws meant to improve public health, recover from natural disasters, promote economic development, and more.

H.R. 6707, the Advancing Equality for Wabanaki Nations Act would update the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act (MICSA) to allow the Wabanaki tribes to benefit from future laws enacted to benefit Indian tribes. These changes would represent a significant step towards equalizing the federal treatment of Wabanaki tribes with that of tribes in the rest of the country. This bill was the subject of a hearing in the House Natural Resources Subcommittee for Indigenous Peoples on Thursday, March 31. This legislation is supported by all of the tribes in Maine, and by many non-native supporters, like myself. When the tribes flourish, we all benefit.

Sincerely,
The Rev. Dr. Myke Johnson

cc: Representative Jared Golden, aaron.sege@mail.house.gov
Representative Chellie Pingree, evan.johnston@mail.house.gov