



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*

April 13, 2022

Dear Chairman Grijalva and Ranking Member Westerman,

The federally recognized indigenous peoples of Maine --collectively as the Wabanaki -- are excluded from many beneficial federal laws that apply to nearly every other federally recognized tribe in the country, 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 (MISCA) to allow the Wabanaki tribes to benefit from future laws enacted to benefit Indian tribes. Section 6(h) of MISCA blocked any federal law previously enacted for the benefit of Indian tribes from applying in Maine if the law would affect state jurisdiction, with limited exceptions and Section 16(b) of MISCA similarly restrained the application of future beneficial federal Indian laws in Maine, unless the law specified that it would apply in Maine. H.R. 6707 corrects the unintended consequences from by Section 16(b) of MISCA. 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.

Examples of laws that MISCA has prevented from applying to the Wabanaki tribes in the past include the following:

- The Violence Against Women Act, which allows tribes to prosecute non-Indian defendants for domestic violence crimes against tribal members;
- The Indian Health Care Improvement Act, which allows tribes to employ much-needed medical professionals who are licensed in another state; and
- The Stafford Act, which allows tribes to directly seek disaster relief and emergency assistance.

H.R. 6707 is supported by all of the tribes in Maine and The Wilderness Society fully supports passage of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Jeremy B Sheaffer

Jeremy Sheaffer
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Representative Chellie Pingree, evan.johnston@mail.house.gov