

Hearing date: May 4, 2021

LD 1626 – An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act

LD 1568 - An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act

Testimony by \_\_\_\_\_, on behalf of the Committee on Indian Relations of the Episcopal Diocese of Maine

Senator Carney, Representative Harnett, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary, my name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I am speaking in favor of LD 1626 and LD 1568, on behalf of the Committee on Indian Relations of the Episcopal Diocese of Maine.

The Committee on Indian Relations has been working for 30 years to improve relationships between Mainers who are descendants of settlers, and the Wabanaki peoples who are descendants of the original inhabitants of what is now the State of Maine. We believe that all people are loved by the One who created us all, and that all people, including those indigenous to this place we now call Maine, deserve to be treated with respect, and to have their voices heard, when decisions are being made that affect their lives.

At its 2020 annual convention, the Episcopal Diocese of Maine adopted Resolution 8, which endorsed LD 2094, the bill in the 129<sup>th</sup> legislature which incorporated the consensus recommendations of the Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act. Regrettably, the pandemic cut short the legislative session, preventing adoption of LD 2094. It's now time for the 130<sup>th</sup> legislature to finish the work begun by the 129<sup>th</sup> legislature.

This legislation is consistent with the 2007 United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, notably the principle that "Indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination". This Declaration was endorsed by the Maine Legislature by resolution in 2008.

Throughout the 201 years of Maine Statehood, the Wabanaki peoples have appealed to the "Good Hearts" of Maine people and the Maine legislature.

“Good Heart” is a phrase used by three Wabanaki co-authors in the preface to the new book, *The Gatherings*. They wrote: *“Our Gatherings, described in this book, fulfilled the promise of our treaties, and they enacted the relations and the commitments that we are all responsible to and for. Our commitment to one another in the Gatherings, and in creating this book, is a model for every Good Heart to follow and implement.”*

“Good Heart” is a better phrase than the more common phrase “good will”, because Good Heart speaks to the capacity to care, to empathize, and to take action based on a clear appreciation of the ways that our past actions have harmed -- even traumatized -- our neighbors.

Among the many provisions in LD 1626 that we wish to affirm are the provisions in section 24, requiring “consultations with the tribes prior to state agency action... that may directly and substantially affect one or more of the tribes.” This section speaks directly to treating the tribes with respect and consulting them about proposed policies that could affect the lives of their citizens.

The process of the Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act exemplified a constructive consultation process based on mutual respect. As we observed the meetings of the Task Force, we saw a shift in the responses of legislators on both sides of the aisle. They wrestled with what is unjust in the Implementing Act and what recommendations they should make to the full legislature to bring about a more just relationship between the tribes and the state. We saw their Good Hearts emerge.

We urge the members of this Committee to continue in the footsteps of the Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act. It is time for members of the Maine legislature to demonstrate their Good Hearts by listening respectfully to the appeals of our Wabanaki neighbors to correct the injustices of the Settlement Acts of 1980, and responding with action by passing this bill.

Thank you for your time and consideration.