



**Maine Unitarian Universalist
State Advocacy Network**
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Maine 130th Legislature – Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary
Testimony in Favor of LD 906
An Act to Provide Passamaquoddy Tribal Members Access to Clean Drinking Water
February 17, 2022

Senator Carney, Representative Harnett,
and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary,

My name is Barbara Acosta. I am a resident of Trenton and a Unitarian Universalist.

I am testifying on behalf of the Maine Unitarian Universalist State Advocacy Network. MUUSAN links Maine's 26 Unitarian Universalist congregations in active legislative ministry. Our organization is unified in support of the passage of LD 906.

We acknowledge that the Wabanaki people occupied this land we call Maine for over twelve thousand years, long before European settlers arrived. They cared for its rivers, lakes and forests in ways that we would do well to honor and emulate.

As Unitarian Universalists, we recognize that the ancestors of many of us, including my own, committed grave atrocities against the Wabanaki people that continue to reverberate even today.

Since passage of the 1980 Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act, the Wabanaki have been denied the right to make decisions over their own well-being. This has created an unjust and immoral relationship in which the State of Maine has placed undue barriers to the provision of clean, safe water, a fundamental human right.

Recently, I heard a young Passamaquoddy woman describe the situation in her community, Sipayik, in which people have not had access to clean water for more than 40 years. Even if families are able to obtain bottled drinking water, they must bathe in water that is full of trihalomethanes and other contaminants. These dangerous chemicals "can cause liver, kidney and central nervous system problems and an increased risk of cancer when a person is exposed to it over time," according to the Maine CDC. My congregation looked into why this situation has gone on for so long. We were dismayed to learn that because of provisions in the 1980 law, the indigenous citizens of Sipayik do not enjoy the sovereignty to resolve their own water crisis.

The Wabanaki are our neighbors, not our wards. LD 906 will recognize the inherent sovereignty of the Wabanaki over their water. It will remove the barriers the State of Maine imposed that have kept places like Sipayik trapped in untenable and hazardous conditions for generations. It is well past time we acted to rectify this wrong. MUUSAN urges you to vote Ought to Pass on LD 906.

Thank you.