

Narragansett Indian Tribe

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Chief Sachem's Office

February 28, 2022

Rep. Evan Shanley
Chairman House Committee on State
Government and Finance
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Re: NARRAGANSETT INDIAN TRIBE

Dear Chairman Shanley:

I am writing on behalf of the Narragansett Indian Tribe of Rhode Island in opposition to H-7470 and H-7471 scheduled for consideration on March 1, 2022, in the House Committee on State Government and Finance.

In 1983, the Narragansett Tribe was federally acknowledged and recognized by the United States as an Indian Nation. (See, 48 Fed. Reg. 6177-78, Feb. 10, 1983). The Narragansett Tribe is the only federally recognized and acknowledged Indian tribe in the State of Rhode Island. The findings and conclusions of its federal acknowledgment were that the Narragansett Indian Tribe "in aboriginal times, inhabited the area which is today the state of Rhode Island." (Emph. Added).

Recently, various groups identifying themselves as Indian, Indian tribes, Indian groups and Indian nations have made claims for recognition, benefits, cultural resources and properties from or within the State of Rhode Island. In fact, two bills were introduced in the General Assembly this session. The first, H-7470 would provide State recognition to the Seaconke Wampanoag Tribe. The second, H7471 would provide for a petition process for State Recognition of Native American Tribes in general.

In 1978 Congress enacting the *Rhode Island Indian Claims Settlement Act, 25 USC §1701, et seq.*, to address claims by the Narragansett Indian Tribe against the State of Rhode Island. Of import here, is that Congress did not believe there were any possible Indian claims in Rhode Island other than those of the Narragansetts. See, *H.R.Rep. No. 95-1453, at 13*. Congress further provided that

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any Indian, Indian nation or tribe of Indians shall have 180 days from enactment of the Settlement Act to file claims. 25 U.S.C. § 1712. There were no claims filed for any recognition, benefit or properties by any individual Indian, Indian nation or tribe of Indian.

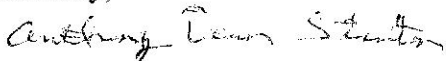
Furthermore, these various groups do not meet the criteria set forth under 25 C.F.R. Part 83 for identifying as an Indian tribe. Including that the petitioner for federal recognition as an Indian Tribe has been identified as an American Indian entity on a substantially continuous basis since 1900 and that the petitioner comprises a distinct community and demonstrates that it existed as a community from 1900 until the present. See, 25 C.F.R. 83.11(a) & (b). The Narragansett's Petition for Federal Recognition required volumes of documentation including evidence of historical existence as a tribe, evidence of independent tribal government with political influence or authority over its members, Tribal governing documents such as by-laws and constitution and genealogy documenting each individual member. See, *bia.gov – Petitioner # 59: Narragansett Indian Tribe, RI*

The Narragansett Tribe opposes H-7470, which by legislative fiat would grant State recognition of the Seaconke Wampanoag tribe. In addition to the overriding concerns regarding lack of process and authentication as set forth above, the bill fails to set forth any criteria by which the Seaconke Wampanoag must demonstrate they comprise a tribal group or government.

The Narragansett Tribe further opposes H-7470 and H-7471 based on the historical actions of the State of Rhode Island. The most notable example was the "1880 Detribalization Act." In 1880 the State of Rhode Island adopted legislation which sought to abolish tribal authority and relations, declared tribal members citizens, ended any state relationship with the tribe and forced the sale of tribal lands. See, *Recommendation and Summary of Evidence for Proposed Finding for Federal Acknowledgment of the Narragansett Indian Tribe of Rhode Island Pursuant to 25 CFR 83 (June 29, 1982)*. The "1880 Detribalization Act" mentions no other Indian tribe, nation or people having any lands, relationship or governmental standing in the State of Rhode Island. The State at no point has any such documented history with the Seaconke Wampanoag, or other tribal groups, who might now seek historical recognition.

Please contact me to discuss these matters.

Sincerely,



Chief Sachem Anthony Dean Stanton

cc: Governor Daniel McKee
Speaker of the House K. Joseph Shekarchi
President of the Senate Dominick J. Ruggiero