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February 10, 2022

To: Representative Janet Ancel, Chair
House Ways & Means Committee

Re: **House Bill H556** A Bill to exempt from the statewide education property tax and the municipal property tax all property owned by Native American tribes that have been recognized pursuant to 1 V.S.A. chapter 23 or owned by the nonprofit organizations that are organized for the benefit of those tribes.

Dear Rep., Ancel,

I am a member of the Board of Trustees for the Quechee Lakes Landowners Association (QLLA) and a full-time resident of Quechee, VT. I am also the chair of QLLA's Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) Council which formed over a year ago.

In the past 16 months I have come to know and work alongside Early Hatley who has Cherokee, Shawnee and Penobscot heritage. He moved to Quechee a few years ago and has really enlightened our DE&I Council with his own native history and the ongoingings of the state.

If Vermonters knew a fraction of the history of the tribes and their daily struggles (to live and keep their traditions alive), I believe they would advocate and do more to help the Indigenous people of Vermont live and thrive here.

The Abenaki nation deserves our support and the support from our state.

They are non-federally recognized tribes and do not have a source of income other than donations, so they have difficult decisions to make every day and most especially when taxes are due. They are barely providing services for their peoples as it is. Much of their services rely on donations from non-native citizens.

This House Bill H556 is critical to the survival of these four bands until they can receive federal recognition and/or consistent sources of revenue. Considering past treatment by the state and federal governments, and in keeping with tax policies on federal level and states within our federalist system, all tribes are to be exempt from paying property and land taxes.

We hope Vermont will invest in our tribes and see this as an investment in our future on many levels -- morally, socially, culturally, educationally, and economically.

I encourage you to PLEASE pass this bill.

Sincerely,

Lynn Luczkowski

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