



The General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts
State House, Boston, MA 02133-1053

April 7, 2020

David L. Bernhardt, Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington DC 20240

Dear Secretary Bernhardt,

We are deeply dismayed and disappointed with the Department of the Interior's recent decision to disestablish and take lands out of trust for the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe on March 27, 2020.

Not since the mid-twentieth century has an Interior Secretary taken action to disestablish a reservation. This outrageous decision comes as we mark 400 years since the arrival of the Pilgrims in 1620 and recognize the People of the First Light who inhabited these shores for centuries before contact. The Department's capricious action brings shame to your office and to our nation. Your decision was cruel and it was unnecessary. You were under no court order to take the Wampanoag land out of trust. Further, litigation to uphold the Mashpee Wampanoag's status as a tribe eligible for the benefits of the Indian Reorganization Act is ongoing. Your intervention was without merit and completely unnecessary.

The fact that the Department made this announcement on a Friday afternoon in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates a callous disregard for human decency. Mashpee Wampanoag leaders were focused on protecting members of their tribe, mobilizing health care resources, and executing response plans when they received your ill-timed announcement.

As you are well aware, the Department of the Interior holds a federal trust responsibility to tribes, which includes the protection of Native American lands. As trustee, the Department should not take action to undermine its responsibility by revoking the reservation status of tribal lands.

The Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe has lived on these aboriginal lands for centuries — since before the Pilgrims arrived 400 years ago, before there was a Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and before there was a United States as we know it today. The Mashpee Wampanoag reservation lands are a critical component of self-governance and sovereignty, and the Tribe should not be stripped of these inherent rights. The Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe deserves the same equal treatment as every other federally recognized tribe.

As such, we urge you in the strongest possible terms to immediately rescind the March 27th action by the Department to disestablish the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe's reservation lands.

Respectfully,



Senator Julian Cyr
Cape & Islands District



Representative David Vieira
3rd Barnstable District



Senator Marc Pacheco
Bristol & Plymouth District

/s

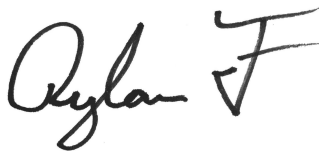
Representative Patricia Haddad
5th Bristol District



Representative Sarah Peake
4th Barnstable District

/s

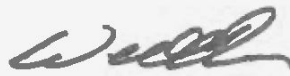
Representative Brad Jones
20th Middlesex District



Representative Dylan Fernandes
Barnstable, Dukes, and Nantucket
District



Representative Timothy R. Whelan
1st Barnstable District



Representative Will Crocker
2nd Barnstable District



Senator Jo Comerford
Hampshire, Franklin & Worcester
District

/s

Senator Paul Feeney
Bristol & Norfolk District

/s

Representative Marjorie Decker
25th Middlesex District



Representative Ruth B. Balsler
12th Middlesex



Representative Antonio F.D.
Cabral
13th Bristol District



Representative Paul McMurtry
11th Norfolk District

/s

Representative Carlos Gonzalez
10th Hampden District

/s

Senator Harriette L. Chandler
1st Worcester District



Senator Jason Lewis
5th Middlesex District



Senator Adam G. Hinds
Berkshire, Hampshire, Franklin &
Hampden District

/s

Senator Anne M. Gobi
Worcester, Hampden, Hampshire
& Middlesex District



Senator James T. Welch
Hampden District



Senator Patricia Jehlen
2nd Middlesex District

/s

Senator Michael Barrett
3rd Middlesex District

/s

Senator Brendan Crighton
3rd Essex District



Senator Michael O. Moore
2nd Worcester District

/s

Senator Michael Rush
Norfolk & Suffolk District

/s

Senator James Eldridge
Middlesex and Worcester District

/s

Senator Cindy Friedman
4th Middlesex District

/s

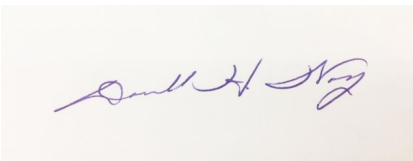
Representative Matthew J.
Muratore
1st Plymouth District



Representative Kay Khan
11th Middlesex District

/s

Representative Lori Ehrlich
8th Essex District



Representative Donald Wong
9th Essex District

/s

Representative Kevin G. Honan
17th Suffolk District



Representative Lou Kafka
8th Norfolk District

/s

Representative Liz Miranda
5th Suffolk District



Representative Adrian Madaro
1st Suffolk District



Representative Kim Ferguson
1st Worcester District



Representative Ken Gordon
21st Middlesex District



Representative Nika Elguardo
15th Suffolk District

/s

Representative Susannah Whipps
2nd Franklin District

/s

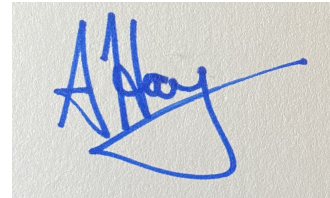
Representative Christine Barber
34th Middlesex District



Representative Linda Dean
Campbell
15th Essex District

/s

Representative Michelle Dubois
10th Plymouth District



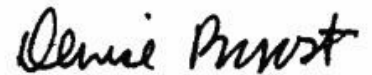
Representative Stephan Hay
3rd Worcester District

/s

Representative Tram Nguyen
18th Essex District



Representative Jack Patrick Lewis
7th Middlesex District



Representative Denise Provost
27th Middlesex District



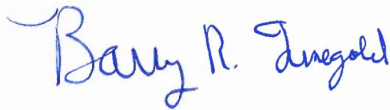
Representative Mindy Domb
3rd Hampshire District

/s

Representative Michelle Ciccolo
15th Middlesex District



Senator Joan B. Lovely
2nd Essex District



Senator Barry R. Finegold
2nd Essex & Middlesex District

/s

Senator Diana DiZoglio
1st Essex District

/s

Senator Nick Collins
1st Suffolk District

/s

Senator Rebecca L. Rausch
Norfolk, Bristol & Middlesex District

/s

Senator Patrick M. O'Connor
Plymouth & Norfolk District



Representative Hannah Kane
11th Worcester District



Representative Joan Meschino
3rd Plymouth District



Senator Joseph Boncore
1st Suffolk & Middlesex District



Representative Natalie Higgins
4th Worcester District

/s

Representative Brian Murray
10th Worcester District

/s

Representative David Muradian
9th Worcester District



Representative Natalie Blais
1st Franklin District



Representative Dan Carey
2nd Hampshire District

/s

Representative David Robertson
19th Middlesex District

/s

Representative Tommy Vitolo
15th Norfolk District



Representative David LeBoeuf
17th Worcester District

/s

Representative Tami Gouveia
14th Middlesex District

/s

Representative Patrick Kearney
4th Plymouth District



Representative Mike Connolly
26th Middlesex District

/s

Representative Lindsay Sabadosa
1st Hampshire District