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September 12, 2024

Dear First Light Community,

This letter serves as a testament to the Somali Bantu Community Association's intent and dedication to building trustful relationships and to work in solidarity with the Wabanaki people and in the community with other nonnative organizations who are un- and re-learning alongside us in First Light. We consider the opportunity to understand and relate to the experiences of the Wabanaki people as an honor and work to transform our perspective in order to advance the goals and work towards justice for the Wabanaki people. The SBCA acknowledges and fully agrees with the priorities of First Light, and will engage fully and meaningfully to leverage resources and power available to us to uplift Wabanaki land search and return.

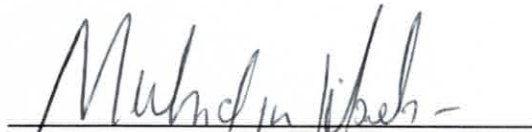
The Somali Bantu Community Association's mission is to provide vital transitional services, advocacy, and food production that empower members of the refugee community to uphold cultural identity and economic well-being to thrive in their new life here in [so-called] Maine. The central pillars of our work are Liberation Farms, our community agriculture program where our farmers grow fresh, chemical-free culturally relevant produce; our Office & Community Center-based Community Advocacy work providing assistance with food benefits, fresh food distributions, childcare, housing, employment, legal migration and healthcare; and the Kashekee Youth Development Program, an intercultural, reciprocal, and intergenerational exchange of Somali Bantu culture and traditional growing practices. Our dynamic programs are the results of the refugee community creating culturally appropriate solutions to self-identified needs after settling in Maine and are the collective visioning process that has evolved since the SBCA was founded in 2005. Our community has suffered from the effects of colonialism, displacement, and the forces of assimilation, albeit in a wholly different timeline and circumstances. We are sympathetic to and wish to be in solidarity with the Wabanaki people who have experienced the atrocities of white supremacy and cultural erasure.

The SBCA is actively involved in efforts to advance land access in multiple grant efforts that seek to build meaningful and trusting relationships with Wabanaki without agenda. It is our hope to invest time and resources in finding the similarities and celebrating the differences between our cultures in solidarity and to build a broader community. Our efforts to exchange foods and cultures have already

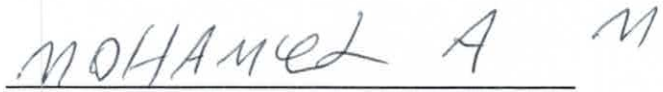
been underway, and we hope to continue to build the relationships we have formed. By understanding each other's perspectives and histories, we strive to move forward to create shared goals, exchange knowledge, and share resources when it feels appropriate and good to all involved. In particular, we are invested in identifying collaborative uses of the 40 acres of woodlot at Liberation Farms, exploring medicinal plants there, and establishing recreational trails open to Wabanaki and members of the refugee community where safe, peaceful, and private communion with nature can be enjoyed.

We have also taken steps to advance and promote Wabanaki Landback's efforts, needs, and success whenever possible by urging donors, partners, and funders to do the same. We have utilized our general operating funds to support a Land Access Project Manager for a partnering Wabanaki nonprofit in order to advocate and advance their land-seeking and securing efforts. We are actively conceiving of ways to envision SBCA land assets are returned to Wabanaki stewardship in the event of our organization's dissolution, and have refused to partner with prominent land trusts to place a conservation easement on Liberation Farms until the limitations and oversight enforced on Wabanaki entities is changed or removed in the Maine State Law. SBCA pledges our Board of Directors and Staff time and energy to pursue the upholding of our invaluable relationships with Wabanaki and Indigenous partners outside of Wabanakik and look forward to participating in the next cohort of First Light to further our engagement and understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing our Wabanaki neighbors.

Sincerely,



Muhidin Libah, SBCA Executive Director



Mohamed A. Mohamed, SBCA Board of Directors Chair