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Episcopal Committee on Indian Relations
LD 1626

This is the first time I have ever submitted testimony to a legislative committee. I've read that, when commenting on a bill, it's a good idea to point out how the proposed legislation will affect you or your family. But it occurs to me that one of the reasons I support LD 1626 is that its passage will have no direct effect on me. I am descended, almost entirely, from Europeans who settled in North America in the seventeenth century. I live in Old Town, on French Island, the next island in the Penobscot River downstream from Indian Island, the modern seat of the Penobscot Nation. As a white guy who owns property just downriver from a reservation, if LD 1626 passes, I can look forward to my situation's remaining the same.

However, if this bill becomes law, certain things will change for my neighbors up the river, and for all the members of the four federally recognized Tribes in Maine. They will become subject to federal Indian law, in the same way as the other 570 recognized Tribes in the other 49 States, and the convoluted provisions of the 1980 MICSA that have forced Maine's Tribes into a legal relationship to the State that is similar to that of municipalities will come to an end. Some clarity will be shed on the relationship between Federal, Tribal and State jurisdictions, and we can expect an end to the sort of conflicts that have arisen repeatedly since 1980. The Tribes will have access to federal programs previously unavailable in Maine. Possibilities for economic development are likely to ensue, with positive effects for surrounding areas.

I hope to see LD 1626 pass, and to see something approaching equity injected into the unbalanced legal situation of my neighbors up the river, and of the other Tribal members around the State of Maine.