

**Testimony in Support of LD 1834: An Act to Establish the Office of Tribal State Affairs from Speaker  
Talbot Ross**

**Maulian Bryant, Penobscot Nation Tribal Ambassador**

**January 10, 2024**

**Judiciary Committee**

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen and members of the committee,

My name is Maulian Bryant and I am the Penobscot Nation Tribal Ambassador. I am testifying today in support of LD 1834 as amended. Thank you to Speaker Talbot Ross for submitting this bill and for the work with tribal leaders to incorporate our feedback and ideas into the language.

I have worked as the Tribal Ambassador since 2017. The Ambassador position was created because in 2015 the Penobscot Nation removed our Tribal Representative because the relationship did not feel equitable and the representation did not feel respected. The Ambassador role is meant to establish and maintain a more sovereign approach to how we work with the three branches of state government, expanding beyond the legislature; as well as having a more meaningful relationship with the federal government. When I took on this role, being the first person to do it, I was extremely honored but also felt a great deal of pressure when determining what this role would look like and what goals we would work towards having an Ambassador.

I have seen over these years some triumphs and some failures. I have seen what works and what doesn't work. I have had the joy of making a lot of great friends and respect you all as my colleagues. I have been welcomed by nearly everyone in this building and taken seriously as an advocate and policy maker. I am sure not everyone has always agreed with me but the role of Ambassador has worked very well as a way to work with this government body and try to advance positive changes for the Penobscot Nation. I have also had a close up look at the evolution of the tribal state relationship over the last six years or so and feel we have made a great deal of progress and I think there is a desire on all sides to keep that progress going.

It is with all of those in mind that I support this legislation to set up an office for Tribal State Affairs housed within the Secretary of State's office and advised by a council appointed by the tribal nations. This level of formality and integration feels like a good step in continuing to improve this relationship. Governor Mills did appoint a tribal liaison for a time and this was a useful position but likely needed more support and having an office and increased tribal involvement and communication would create a more meaningful and robust collaboration.

Thank you for considering my testimony and I am happy to answer questions.