

To: Representative Kuhn, Senator Carney, and Honorable members of the committee
From: Audrey Piltch
Re: Testimony in Support of LD 958, An Act to Prohibit Eminent Domain on Tribal Lands

I write to you as a young Mainer, college student, and an American abroad. I urge you to vote “ought to pass” on LD 958.

As a junior, the first testimony I wrote was to advocate for LD 1642: An Act to Strengthen the Teaching of Wabanaki Studies in Maine Schools with the student activists group of my high school. It gave me such pride to not only become involved with my state government but also to be finally using my voice to support Indigenous rights. I write to you again as a young student appealing to the Maine legislature to follow through on Wabanaki issues.

We have been sorely lacking in our education and resulting respect for Indigenous people in the United States. In starting my higher education in Canada, I have only seen this fault in more contrast. In Montreal, we call the land Tiohtià:ke. We recognize that they are unceded lands and the Kanien’kehá:ka Nation is the steward. Every class begins with this acknowledgement. Do we remember the name of the land we call Maine? Do we recognize our history of Indigenous people who have worked in peace and reciprocity with the natural world? Do we recognize Maine’s history of inflicting pain and the exclusion of the Wabanki from their own homes?

Being introduced to a community that holds the name of Indigenous people with respect makes me ashamed to compare the shortcomings of my own home. There have been too many exploitative treaties that push people from their homelands—homelands that they care for with far more wisdom and respect than any colonial settler has, as we can see with the degradation of the environment and sea levels rising higher than the national average in our own Gulf of Maine.

Besides their ecocentric perspective and caring stewardship, Indigenous people deserve the unfringed right to their own lands because of their presence as human beings. Western colonizers had no authority except the one they fabricated when they intruded on the East coast, and it is our duty to show humanity in recognizing Wabanaki sovereignty today.

Respectfully submitted,
Audrey Piltch