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LD 958

Hello, I am writing in support of LD 958. I am part of the statewide First Light Learning Journey program where 120 Mainers representing 50 organizations are learning about the benefits of Wabanaki land stewardship. As the tribes are slowly able to acquire more land for their livelihoods and sustenance, we need to ensure that no entity can take that away from them again. Thank you for considering. Below are additional talking points:

--This bill restores fairness and respects Wabanaki Nations' sovereignty over their own lands. No one should have their land taken without consultation or agreement. LD 958 removes the state of Maine's power to take Wabanaki Nations' tribal land through eminent domain. This is a protection already afforded to almost all other federally recognized tribes.

--Taking tribal land without consultation is against federal policy. Federal law protects most tribal nations from state-level eminent domain, but the 1980 Settlement Acts have resulted in the Wabanaki Nations in Maine being unfairly excluded from these federal protections.

--History shows the harm of eminent domain on Wabanaki lands. Maine Route 190, which cuts through the heart of the Passamaquoddy Reservation at Sipayik, was taken by eminent domain in 1925—a decision made without tribal input. LD 958 would ensure that no such action happens again without tribal consultation.

--This bill encourages collaboration, not conflict. If a project could truly benefit the public, the state, and the tribes, the state should work with tribal leaders to find a solution. This legislation is a protective measure to guarantee consultation and mutual agreement before any action is taken on tribal lands. It ensures the tribes have a voice.

Bottom line: a step towards justice and fairness. The Wabanaki Nations should not be treated differently from other federally recognized tribes. This bill ensures fairness, respects sovereignty, and prevents future injustices. LD 958 restores a fundamental principle that the Wabanaki Nations are sovereign governments with inherent power to regulate their territories.