

THE FRIENDS COMMITTEE ON MAINE PUBLIC POLICY

April 4, 2025

To: Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

From: Shirley Hager, 129 Chesterville Hill Road, Chesterville, ME 04938
Friends (Quaker) Committee on Maine Public Policy (FCMPP), and
Clerk, Committee on Tribal-State Relations of FCMPP

Re: **Support for LD 958: An Act to Prohibit Eminent Domain on Tribal Lands**

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Shirley Hager, and in testifying in support of LD 958, I speak on behalf of the Committee on Tribal-State Relations of the Friends (Quaker) Committee on Maine Public Policy. We are a statewide group that, for over thirty years, has advocated for a right and just relationship between the State of Maine and our Wabanaki neighbors. We align ourselves with the advancement of Wabanaki interests to the betterment, we believe, of all who live in Maine, and **we urge you to unanimously support LD 958, An Act to Prohibit Eminent Domain on Tribal Lands.**

This bill amends the 1980 Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act and the 2023 Mi'kmaq Nation Restoration Act to prevent the state from taking Wabanaki land for public uses, often referred to as "the right of eminent domain." This would apply to land located within Passamaquoddy Tribe territory, Penobscot Nation territory, Houlton Band of Maliseets Trust Land and the Mi'kmaq Nation Trust Land. By removing language that gives the state eminent domain power over tribal lands, LD 958 restores a fundamental principle that the Wabanaki Nations are sovereign governments with inherent power to regulate their territories, a status afforded to almost all other federally recognized tribes. It is also a bill that encourages collaboration, not conflict. If a project could truly benefit the public, the state, and the Tribes, then the state should work with Tribal leaders to find a solution.

Wabanaki land under the jurisdiction of the Tribes represents only about *one percent* of the land mass within the state of Maine.¹ To keep in place statutes that allow further encroachment on lands stewarded by the Tribes, lands that support their economic health and their very identity, gives unnecessary and arbitrary power to the state's government, and makes it even more unconscionable that Maine could be allowed to take land by eminent domain. The Friends Committee on Maine Public Policy urges the Judiciary Committee to vote unanimously ought to pass on LD 958.

¹"Land Access for Indigenous and African American Farmers in Maine," Report to the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, by the Permanent Commission on Racial, Indigenous and Tribal Populations, February 2022, p. 4.

The Friends Committee on Maine Public Policy is a statewide network of Quakers concerned with public policy and social justice issues. For over thirty years, one of our main priorities has been support of Wabanaki concerns and the improvement and strengthening of Tribal-state relations.