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Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

LD 958— An Act to Prohibit Eminent Domain on Tribal Lands

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary, my name is Karen Blakelock and I am a policy advisor for The Nature Conservancy in Maine. **I appreciate this opportunity to provide written comment in support of LD 958, An Act to Prohibit Eminent Domain on Tribal Lands.**

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is a nonprofit conservation organization dedicated to conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends. Guided by science, we create innovative, on-the-ground solutions to our world's toughest challenges so that both nature and people can thrive. We use a collaborative approach that engages local communities, governments, the private sector, and other partners. The Nature Conservancy has been leading conservation in Maine for more than 60 years and is the 12th largest landowner in the state, owning and managing roughly 300,000 acres.

Supporting the voice, choice, and action of Indigenous Peoples is key to The Nature Conservancy's vision of a world where people and nature thrive. Here in Maine, we continue to learn about the historical and ongoing injustices faced by the Wabanaki Tribes. We acknowledge the urgency of addressing these injustices and support meaningful action in this direction. Prohibiting the use of eminent domain on tribal lands is a small but meaningful step towards respecting Wabanaki Nations' sovereignty over their own lands, a protection already afforded to almost all other federally recognized tribes.

Beyond the bill in front of us today, we must continue to strengthen the voice, choice, and action of Wabanaki Communities. TNC remains committed to supporting tribal sovereignty and forging relationships based on mutual support and trust. We do not speak for Indigenous Peoples, but by working together we can elevate their voices and priorities and advance our shared goals. Our work should aim to build rather than burden the capacity of our Indigenous neighbors and this bill before you today is a step towards recognizing their long history and ongoing connection to all parts of our State.

We urge this committee to **support LD 958**. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written comment.