



Testimony before the Judiciary Committee

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

April 4, 2025

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and Members of the Committee:

I am Rev. Jane Field, Executive Director of the Maine Council of Churches. The Council has seven mainline Protestant member-denominations and two associate member congregations who together have over 400 local churches in Maine with more than 50,000 parishioners in their care. The Council is honored to be a member of the Wabanaki Alliance Coalition, as are several of our member denominations and a number of their local churches around the state.

I am testifying on behalf of the Council **in SUPPORT of LD 958.**

As we have stated in previous testimony before this Committee, **the Maine Council of Churches affirms our respect for and recognition of the inherent sovereignty of Maine's indigenous tribes** and we are committed (1) to support their right to self-determination, self-governance, self-sufficiency, and cultural identity, (2) to address our own racism, and (3) to promote social justice. Toward those ends, **we call on our legislature to strengthen our state's actions to honor our collective responsibility to the tribes to interact with them on a mutually respectful and appropriate government-to-government basis.**

As you know, the Legislature's Task Force on Changes to the 1980 Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act made it clear: **changes are urgently needed. That includes removing language that gives the state the power of eminent domain over tribal lands.**

**Removing this language would restore a necessary element of recognition of the Wabanaki Nations as sovereign governments with inherent power to regulate their territories.**

**No one should have their land taken by the state without consultation or agreement, yet that's what MICSA has allowed to happen on Wabanaki land** without the tribes having any say, and it has caused harm. This bill would prevent future harm from being done, ensure that the tribes' voices will be heard, and provide a measure of protection for a people who, for too long, have been mistreated, disrespected, and betrayed—despite the fact that this land has been theirs for thousands of years, and they have lived in right relationship with it from time immemorial.

The mission of the Maine Council of Churches includes creating **a more just, compassionate, and peaceful community** here. Repairing the harm MICSA (and generations of colonists' descendants before it) has done, and guaranteeing protection for the Wabanaki Nations against eminent domain in the future would **move Maine closer to that vision.**

Passage of LD 958 is one step the Maine legislature can take toward promoting harmony, reconciliation, and mutual understanding between our State and the Wabanaki Nations. It is a step that is long overdue. For these reasons, the Maine Council of Churches supports LD 958 and **urges you to vote OUGHT TO PASS.**

*Episcopal Diocese of Maine, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Presbyterian Church (USA),  
Religious Society of Friends, Unitarian Universalist Association, United Church of Christ, United Methodist Church*

Jane Field  
Maine Council of Churches  
LD 958

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