

Maine Climate Action **NOW!**

To: Maine Legislature Committee on Judiciary

From: Ezra Sassaman, Advocacy Coordinator, Maine Climate Action Now!

Date: April 9, 2025

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

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and members of the Committee on Judiciary, my name is Ezra Sassaman. I live in Bar Harbor and represent Maine Climate Action Now! (MCAN), a coalition of fifteen grassroots nonprofit organizations from across Maine united by a desire to progress our state forward and engage in transformative action in response to the climate crisis.

MCAN stands in solidarity with the Penobscot Nation, the Passamaquoddy Tribe, the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians and the Mi'kmaq Nation and recognizes there is no true climate justice without the inclusion of these and other tribes. The Wabanaki Nations have a history of stewardship of natural resources and the land, and must have the right to manage the lands, waters, and resources they hold as sacred and traditionally significant without the threat of their ancestral lands being seized by the State.

This legislation is needed because it makes important progress in the ongoing work of setting the Wabanaki Nations on equal footing with other federally recognized tribes across the country. Taking tribal land without tribes' input is not the practice in other states, as it is against federal policy.

Unfortunately, among other negative consequences, the 1980 Settlement Acts has resulted in the unjust exclusion of the Wabanaki Nations from federal protections against eminent domain. LD 958 will help undo that unfairness.

This legislation is an important safeguard for the tribes and encourages the public, the state, and tribal leaders to work together to find mutually beneficial solutions in the future rather than decision-making being a one-way street that gives the state unilateral power to affect the tribes without their input.

For the above stated reasons, MCAN supports – and encourages you to vote “ought-to-pass” on LD 958. Thank you.