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LD 958

-LD 958 restores fairness to and respect for Wabanaki Nations' sovereignty over their own lands. No one should have their lands taken by force or coercion ever. LD 958 takes away the State of Maine's power to use eminent domain, a form of both state force and state coercion the State of Maine currently is allowed to wield to take Wabanaki tribal lands unjustly. The protections proposed in LD 958 are protections already afforded to almost all other federally recognized tribes, and speaking as a citizen of Maine it's a protection the Wabanaki Nations' are deserving of and entitled to as well.

-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. This is an unacceptable status quo for our state and I hope LD 958 is a key step in righting this wrong. The Wabanaki Nations should be freed from the purview of the 1980 Settlement Acts and the State of Maine should adopt LD 958 as a replacement framework instead.

-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. The treatment of the Wabanaki Nations in our state and national history is dark enough, its past time action is taken to right these historic wrongs and I see LD 958 as a wonderful step in that direction.

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.